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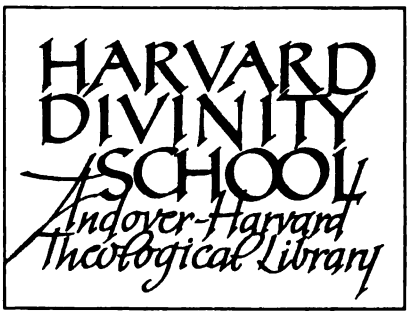
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BY LIVING MINISTERS.

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SERMON I.

BY REV. WILLIAM B. O. PEABODY, OF SPRINGFIELD.

RELIGION RECOMMENDED TO THE YOUNG.

PROVERBS, VIII. 17.—'THOSE THAT SEEK ME EARLY SHALL FIND ME.'

If any one part of life is more important in a religious point of view than another, it is certainly the season of youth; I mean the time, when the dependence of childhood is over, and the cares of maturer life are not yet begun. It is a resting-place, where the young may stand and ponder the path of their feet. Up to this point, they have been led by the affection and care of others; from this point, they are, in all important respects, to determine their character and destiny for themselves; and therefore they assume an undivided responsibility for the feelings they cherish, the deeds they do, and the principles which they form. It is a time, on the right improvement of which much depends; and it is shamefully abused by those who give it all up to light-hearted and careless joy.

There is nothing in all religion so inspiring as the offers and promises made to the young. The voice of heavenly wisdom addresses them in its mildest tones,

telling them that God can derive no advantage from their services, nor can he lose or suffer anything, however corrupt or indifferent they may be. It is for their own sake that he calls upon them—invites them—and almost entreats them to be religious: it is because he desires to see them happy, and knows that there is but one way in which they can be permanently happy. He calls upon them in youth, because if that time is wasted, the best part of existence is lost. They may possibly become religious in later life, but the chances are few and small: they may become religious before they die, but they can never feel sure that God will accept the waste and remnant of their life, when he has a right to it all, from the first dawn of thoughtfulness, to the evening of their latest day. And the heart early offered to God is the most acceptable sacrifice which this world affords. It is like the golden altar of the temple, on which sweet incense was burned in the pure morning air; it stood without the veil indeed, but as near as possible to the ark of the testimony and the mercy-seat between the cherubim within; so the heart, offered to God in the morning beauty of holiness, though separated by the veil of flesh from his immediate presence, stands as near as possible to his presence, his mercy and his love.

I present this subject to you now, because an event has just happened among you, which has made a deep impression.* A stranger came to you to enjoy the happiness of life; she left her friends in perfect confidence that they should meet her in health and happiness again: her young companions trusted to welcome her

* See note on the last page.

on her return—to take sweet counsel with her, and go in company to the house of God again. She is returned. She is once more among them. But they have welcomed, not the living, but the dead. They heard not her step on the threshold, announcing that she was nigh; they heard not the voice, which was once sweet music to their ears; the hand, which once returned the warm pressure of affection, was motionless and still, and the eye, which once shone bright with kindness, was forever sealed in death. All were cold as death could make them; friendship and love could do nothing but attend her to the grave.

There are few events in life so mournfully affecting as this. What had she done, to pass away from the world so soon—at the very hour when life was brightest, to exchange it for the grave? Remember that God governs in the world; nothing is beneath his attention, nothing beyond his power. What you call the act of death is in truth the act of God; the gloomy destroyer is nothing more than an imagination: the power which takes away the blessing is the same which gave it. His providence brought her from the place where she lived and where she wished to die. And why was it so? Undoubtedly it was meant to teach you to be wise: the gates of death are not opened to us, and we know not why it was best for the dead; but we know why it was best for you. It was meant to give you an impression, which you should carry with you to your graves. Treasure it in your hearts; and when the hour which is not far from any one of you, shall come, you may remember this event, as the one which made you wise unto salvation: for many of the purest char-

acters and holiest lives can trace their beginning to impressions received in the chamber of sickness, at the death-bed, or the grave.

Let us accept this intimation of Divine providence as an injunction of our duty. Suffer me to call on you, who have just seen the grave open beneath a step as light as your own, to regard the things which belong to your peace. You will confess, I know, that you have not given them the attention which they demand, and which they must have—yes, *must* have; for if you expect to reach heaven without seriousness, without thoughtfulness, without duties and exertions, I would ask you on what your hope is founded. You never learned it here, and I think you never could have learned it from the gospel. Perhaps you do not feel that there is any danger; no! in the summer day, you cannot feel as if the desolation of winter would ever come. Still there may be danger; and there is; this very security is danger; the holy and heavenly-minded never feel secure; they know that he who thinks that he stands, is the very one to take heed lest he fall, and that there is a way which seemeth right, though the end of it is death. To some, certainly, these words convey an intimation of danger; do they give an assurance of safety to you? I confess that I dread this peace of mind which I see everywhere around me; it is not the peace of religion in you all. But since you can no longer plead the privilege of childhood; since you cannot say that your hearts are overwhelmed with the cares of life, as the heart should never be, I shall once more implore you, and I hope not entirely in vain, to consider your duty in the present life and your destiny in the life to come.

But as soon as I mention the subject, I feel at once the difficulties that attend it; and the first is, that there is something to be done; there is something which you must do for yourselves. And yet from early childhood, you have depended on others, and have been compelled to do nothing for yourselves. The food you eat, the raiment you wear, the bed on which you rest, the roof which shelters you, are supplied by others, and you have nothing to do but to enjoy them. You are not obliged to exert yourselves even for your own improvement; you lean upon the arm of instruction; and all these favors are given with such delicacy such disinterested and self-denying affection, that you are not conscious of the least obligation, but simply feel that there is nothing for yourselves to do.

It is evident, that with such feelings, religious characters never can be formed. For the only way to form them, is to do religious duties, and yet perhaps you have not learned to do anything for yourselves. Still the intelligent among the young cannot live wholly unmindful of religion, and from being thus unused to action, they become subjects of religious impressions. But what is an impression? It is something wrought in them and for them by the agency of another. Religious impressions in childhood may invest the subject with a kind of reverence, which is good for the soul; but when the time of thoughtfulness begins, they must give way to principles of action. Since there is something to be done, there must be something within which shall inspire you to do it: but religious impressions alone have no such power, and therefore they never can make you Christians.

The same may be said of the feelings which youth is most in the habit of indulging. The young know not what the christian virtues are. They take it for granted that warm-hearted kindness—cheerful disinterestedness and generous forbearance with others, are christian virtues; they think they see the spirit of Christianity in a thousand beautiful traits of feeling which light up the darkness of the world: and so far they are right: but they are mistaken, when they think that feeling can exist without action, and that any feelings may be trusted, which do not prove their genuineness by the evidence of deeds. They do not feel as if action were so essential: they admire these feelings even more when they are breathed from the eloquent lip or when they glow in the kindling eye, than when they see them expressed in the silent language of deeds. And yet you have seen those, whose benevolence was sufficient to inspire the tongue and the eye, but not to induce them to make the least sacrifice or exertion for others. Those who dissolve in tears over representations of distress in which every thing is elegant and engaging, turn away with disgust from the vulgar reality of suffering, which is all they find in the world. But He who knows the heart will have nothing to do with feelings unless they are confirmed, and confirmed upon the spot by deeds. Because, every time your feeling is touched, you feel less; every time you act, you do more; the actions grow in strength and power, while the feelings wear themselves out and die: so that those who have nothing but feelings, resemble the barren fig-tree, on which our Saviour, finding no fruit, pronounced the withering curse, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward, forever.

A second reason why the young are so reluctant to form religious characters, is, that they do not know what is meant by being happy. They desire happiness, and they are right; their sun is rising, and why should they be sad, when they see its warm red light cast upon the path of life before them? They need not listen to those prophets of evil, who call on them to be miserable for the sake of religion; for religion is widely misunderstood by those, who say that it makes this life wretched to prepare us to enjoy the other. To call this world a vale of tears, 'a wretched land that yields us no supply,' is an affront and injury to Him, who when he made it, pronounced it good; and yet there are some, who think it their duty to libel the works of his hands, even in their sacrifices of praise. Still the young know not how to enjoy it. Christianity says to them, 'the pleasures most likely to attract you, are not such as can make you happy. Happiness is something that endures; these pleasures cannot last, and therefore can make no part of that happiness which endures forever. God will not allow you to lean upon them, because they will fail at last and leave you desolate and in tears. He desires that you should possess and learn to enjoy that happiness, which will last as long as the soul. It is nothing excited—nothing loud; for every thing loud, violent, and excited, must, from its nature, pass away. It is the calm satisfaction of a heart, at peace with others and with God. It cannot be called the sunshine of the breast, because the sun will set; it cannot be called the summer of the soul, because the winter will come, and this happiness admits no variation except the upward change from glory to glory. It is

not even joyous; it rather inclines to sadness; for we are always pensive and thoughtful, when we are most truly happy.

In this, however, the young are not alone to blame; for many Christians tell them of the pleasures of religion. But religion has nothing resembling what they call pleasure. Suppose that in order to save the young from sloth and self-indulgence, you tell them of the pleasure of exercise in the fresh morning air. If they are prevailed upon to try the experiment once or twice, they find no enjoyment in it, and will not be persuaded to make the attempt again. The truth is, that these things cannot be enjoyed till the habit is formed; they cannot even be understood till then. If you speak to Christians of the pleasures of religion, they will know what you mean; but beware how you talk of those pleasures to the young, or to those whom you would persuade to be Christians; you will prepare them for disappointment; for no man can taste those pleasures till he is familiar with his duty.

A third reason why so many of the young fail to form religious characters, is that they do not understand that persevering labor is required. You have had your hours of thoughtfulness; you have determined to be Christians, and after making the experiment for a little while, have said that you could not succeed. And this you call making the trial! Go to that organ; dash your hand along the keys; and then return disappointed, and say that you can produce no harmonious sounds. No one ever thought that you could. The meanest art or accomplishment cannot be learned without labor, and who could suppose that the great science of life can be learn-

ed—that preparation for immortal existence can be made, within the limits of a day or an hour?

But the true reason of this failure must be, that your desire of improvement is not so intense and energetic as the pursuit requires. You must set your standard of excellence high. You must not hope to reach it: but you must be satisfied with the consciousness, that you are always advancing: it should be enough if the path shine brighter and brighter; you must not expect in this world, to behold the perfect day. Do not then let your desire of improvement indulge in short and unprofitable flights, like the small bird's wing; neither let it move in darkness, like the bird of night: let it rise with wings as eagles, and tower with cheerful, bold, and glorious flights, through the immeasurable vast of heaven.

Having thus alluded to some of those difficulties which prevent the thoughtful among the young from forming a religious character, let me say a few words concerning the elements, of that character—love to God and man.

There are some of you who say that you cannot understand what is meant by love of God—a being whom you never saw. There is nothing mysterious certainly in loving a father; and suppose that your father left you in your infancy, and went to reside in a foreign land. You have no recollection of his person, but you are constantly receiving from him presents and proofs of his remembrance and love, such as make it evident that the thought of you, and the desire for your happiness is never absent from his breast. Do you think it would not be possible to love him? On the contrary his image would be present to your thoughts by day, and your dreams by night: your letters to him would breathe the

very soul of affection, and you would welcome the time when he should send for you to leave all, and go to share his happiness in that far-off land.

A similar illustration also will best explain to you that trust in your heavenly Father, which is implied in the love of God. You can imagine a child on a perilous journey under a father's care. Whatever dangers surround them, he fears nothing, because his father is there; when others shrink and tremble, he borrows firmness from his fathers eye; through all the day he looks up to him with gentle and confiding affection, and at night he sleeps in beautiful calmness by his father's side. Such should your love to your unseen father be. It should be your constant endeavor to do what you know will please him; and you should have a firm persuasion that in all your disappointments, cares, and sorrows, he regards nothing but your welfare: knowing this, both while you live and when you die, you can maintain an unfaltering confidence in his love to you, and thus offer the best expression of your love to Him.

The love of man also, the other great and comprehensive duty of religion, is easily understood by those who wish to understand it. The love of man is not an imaginary feeling: possibly you may be strangers to it, but there are those in whom it is fervent and strong. You may be in the habit of hearing complaints of the unworthiness, treachery, and falsehood of the whole race of man; but whatever truth there may be in such charges, they are not preferred by those who have a right to make them. God, who knows men best, and has received most ingratitude at their hands, loves them: Jesus Christ, who knew what was in man, and was out-

cast, injured, and rejected by men, loved them: for the truth is, that a human soul is a pearl of great price: and if it can only be cleansed from its corruption, it is the greatest treasure that can be rescued from destruction, and the best that can be offered to God.

But let me caution you against supposing that amiable feelings and manners will fulfil this great duty of the gospel. Certainly they are excellent, and they have their reward; for they give loveliness and attraction to all who possess them; but do not let your own imagination, nor the affection of others persuade you, that they can ever amount to religious duty. You remember perhaps the young man who came to Jesus Christ, and of whom it was said, that the Saviour loved him. Amiable no doubt he was, but he had not one spark of religious feeling: if you think that he was what he ought to have been, because our Saviour loved him, remember that he loves the whole race of man.

Do not, then, when you see an amiable thoughtless being living in perfect indifference to religion, say that Jesus Christ would have loved him. Ask whether these traits which you love are his own virtues, or gifts of God—whether they were formed by his own exertion, or by the inspiration of the Almighty. You will find that these persons whom you love, are those whom God has most liberally blessed; whose dispositions he has made such, that they might almost without an effort, be Christians. Can you not see, that for those to whom God has given so much, to give nothing to him—for those, whom he has made almost Christians, to refuse to make themselves wholly so, is an unworthy return for the mercy from on high. Love them, we may;

love them, we know their Father and their Saviour will; but all the affection of angels or of men cannot gain them a place among those who have done their religious duty.

I am asking you to remember the promise 'those that seek me early shall find me,' because I know, that you cannot be happy without the dispositions and characters which Christianity tends to form. However prosperous your life may be, the pleasures of this world are not satisfactory; they were never meant to endure, and you will want something which this world can never give. But you cannot hope to stand beyond the reach of changes: let your morning sun shine as radiantly as it will, it must be often darkened: hearts will be divided and hopes will be destroyed: there are sorrows which follow human passion; there are misfortunes sent by the act of God: you will sit by the bedside of the sick; you will mourn by the graves of the dead; the common destiny of man will not be reversed for you, nor will your heavenly Father permit you to be of the number of those, who, 'because they have no changes, fear not God.' I would not say that these visitations impair the value of existence; life is a blessing with all its sorrows: still, you must be prepared for the hour of adversity and trial, and I do assure you, that all the suggestions of affection—all the counsels of wisdom are nothing, compared with the words 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'

But if you trust that a more fortunate destiny is be-

fore you, and hope that the messenger of sorrow will pass by your doors, still 'the living know that they must die.' That doom cannot pass away; and turning once more to that event, of which I have reminded you, let me ask, if you have made any preparation for that hour. It is an awful thing to die! to come so near the grave, as to feel its shadow on the eyelids and its chillness on the brow! It is an awful thing, to stand upon the very edge of the ghastly steep of death, expecting every moment to sink from all that is known and loved, into that unknown depth, which no human line ever sounded—which no human eye can explore. But I tell you no vision of fancy—I tell you what has just happened among you, when I say that I have seen a young and gentle girl standing there—there, where you would not stand for all beneath the sun,—there, where the heart of the bravest is cold and pale with dismay—standing there, where it makes us tremble even to see another stand—and looking down, with an eye which did not close, with a heart which did not falter, with serenity like an angel's, into the immeasurable depth below. It was a sublime and affecting sight! would that I could bring it before you with power; for this wide world, with all its changes, affords no scene of equal glory.

And what, think you, sustained her in that fearful hour? was it any native strength? was it any firmness naturally belonging to the human heart? No! it was an unshaken confidence in the mercy of her God; it was firmness borrowed from the rock of ages; it was continuing all night in prayer to God; it was leaning on the cross of him, who died that we might live. Thus,

supported, she died in peace without either triumph or dismay; though her father called her early, she was ready to seek his face. May you have equal calmness in the last hour of your lives! may your departure be holy and happy! may your hope of eternity be as bright and fervent, as that of her who has perished 'like the grass that withereth before it groweth up; wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, neither he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.'

Do not think that this was done by sudden preparation. Do not believe that the light of religious faith and devotion was kindled in the moment of alarm. Not so; the affectionate counsels of a parent had drawn her in the path of religious duty with bands of love: the words of judicious instruction had been treasured in her breast. When the time of thoughtfulness came, she had formed and cherished the principles of religious trust, obedience, and devotion; and when her faith was tried, it was not found wanting; though the storm of death swept over it, it fell not, for it was founded on a rock.

Do not go away and forget the lesson of mortality, which the voice of Divine Providence has addressed so directly to you; do not reject these warnings; for there are some to whom they cost far too much, to be lightly thrown away. Do not take one step more in the journey of life, without the preparation of the gospel of peace. Accept the offer of your God, to be the guide and guardian of your way. If your days on earth shall be many, he will support you to the last decline of age; and if your sun shall go down while it is yet day, and you seem to ask in vain for length of days, you will

find, even then, that your prayer is answered, and that he has given it—even length of days forever and ever.

Note.—It may be necessary to explain various allusions which are made in the preceding pages. The sermon was suggested by an event which deeply affected the mind of the writer, and seemed, in many respects, adapted to make a lasting and happy impression upon the young. A young lady of nineteen came to visit a friend among us, and was soon after seized with a disorder of which she died. She had been educated by a judicious parent, who had endeavored to associate the subject of religion in the minds of her children, with every thing cheerful, innocent, and happy. The result of this care appeared, in the fine serenity with which she endured the pain of a short and severe illness, and the calmness with which, in the full possession of her faculties, she looked forward to the grave. The mild and solemn resignation of the parent, and the sweet and gentle firmness of her child, who was fully aware that her days were numbered, were sustained by an unfaltering trust in the mercy of God, through him that liveth and was dead: so that the chamber of death was lighted up by the spirit of patience and prayer, and death itself, instead of being a forcible and painful separation, was the mild and almost cheerful farewell of those who believed that they should meet again. The whole scene, so unlike the darkness and gloom which too often surround the deathbed, and the religious feeling there displayed, which neither rose into enthusiasm nor subsided into coldness, could they be fully described, would afford an impressive example and a noble evidence of the truth and power of Christianity.

SERMON II.

BY REV. GEORGE RIPLEY, BOSTON.

THE DUTY OF CONSTANT GRATITUDE TO GOD.

PS. XXXIV. 1.—I WILL BLESS THE LORD AT ALL TIMES: HIS PRAISE SHALL CONTINUALLY BE IN MY MOUTH.

THERE are probably few whose minds are not directed, at particular times, to the contemplation of the wisdom and goodness of God; but, there are still fewer, we have reason to fear, who cherish the habitual sense of the divine presence and love, which is expressed in the language of our text. The insensibility of man, to the constant perfection and beauty that are displayed in the arrangements of Providence, is indeed, the subject of common remark; and, it must strike us, as a matter of peculiar astonishment, that this deficiency should be found not only among the frivolous and unthinking, who are indifferent to the claims of religion, in every form, but also among those, whose minds are deeply imbued with sentiments of piety, and who deem themselves the sincere and favored worshippers of the Most High. The difficulty arises from the erroneous ideas which men entertain respecting their connexion

with God. They are apt to look for his presence, in some signal interpositions of his power, rather than in the calm and regular course of his Providence. They are perpetually imagining occasions, on which the agency of God is exercised in their behalf; while they take little notice of the uniform and uninterrupted agency in which he operates for the benefit of mankind. They are more strongly excited at the idea of a blessing, which they have themselves received, from the immediate hand of God, than they are at the contemplation of the blessings without number and without end, which are constantly pouring forth, from the general laws of Providence, upon the whole universe. The rain, which falls upon their own fields, in answer to their prayers, and restores the vegetation, that was withering and blackening under the unmitigated fervors of the summer's sun, produces a deeper emotion of gratitude, than those steadfast and beautiful laws, by which the vapors are collected from the surface of the earth, and return again in showers, to refresh the parched and pulverized soil. They hear the voice of the wind, as it breathes mildly over the hot earth, at the approach of even-tide, or as it rushes, from the four quarters of heaven, in the majesty of the fierce winter's storm; and little do they think of Him, at whose word it comes and goes, obedient to his bidding, and subject to his will; but let it arise, to waft their ship in safety, when struggling with the elements; let it blow, when a conflagration is raging, and avert the flames from their dwelling, then the hand of God is acknowledged,—then a providential escape is spoken of,—then the divine goodness is recognized and blessed. But my friends, the hand of God

is as much in the wind which bloweth over the wilderness, where no man is, as in that which saved your property from destruction. His Providence is as active, in the daily operations of nature, which are scarcely regarded, with a religious sentiment, as in those rare and striking events, which you are accustomed to designate as especial interpositions of his power. It is to this point, that I would now direct your attention. I wish to illustrate the truth, that we should bless God at all times, that his praise should be continually in our mouth, not merely, when we suppose that an immediate act of his power has been exerted, but whenever we consider the wise and beneficent operation of the general laws of Divine Providence.

It may be that you are not deficient in gratitude and are ready to extol the goodness of God, as soon as you think you have perceived its effects. But there must be some interruption of the usual course of events, before you are sensible that the Deity is present. You feel grateful, for instance, that during the past season, the scourge of pestilence which has ravaged so many portions of our land, and clad such numbers of our population in the garments of mourning, has been averted, in so great a degree from our own dwellings, and that we are still enjoying such an uncommon share of health and tranquillity. You may be disposed to say that the Almighty has listened to the prayers of his children, and granted them safety from the calamity, which they feared, by a direct and special interposition of his will. But suppose, that we had suffered no alarm from the progress of a fearful disease, that health had reigned in all our borders, and security in every dwelling, should we

have any the less reason for gratitude to God, on account of the prosperity, which we now enjoy? Would it be any the less true, that the health of our land, was the effect of his providential care, even if no fears had been excited for its continuance? Yet, how few, who think of their dependence upon God, and his constant claim upon their gratitude, when these facts are not forced upon their attention, by the prospect of dangers, which come home to their bosoms! But why should we not acknowledge our Father's care at all times? Why should not his praise be continually in our mouths? For it is his Providence, which has fitted the earth and the air, the wind and the water, to minister to the happiness and health of man. He gives the soft breeze its healing power, he creates the sweet influences of the sun, he prepares the corn and the vine, the seed and the fruit, which furnish our needful sustenance; he has granted to our muscular frame its strength; he has fenced it with bones and clothed it with sinews; he has fashioned the curious organs, by which the miracles of our living nature are performed, and should he withhold his hand, we should die and return to the dust. Ought these proofs of God's goodness to be forgotten by us, my friends, until we are reminded of their existence, by the prospect of their loss? And suppose, that the deliverance, which we have thus far experienced, from the evils we apprehended, is the natural consequence of temperance and cleanliness, the result of physical laws, which it is given to us to understand. We have none the less reason to be grateful to God, than if he had sent the angel of his presence, to stand between the living and the dead, and to stay the pro-

gress of the desolating plague. For who gave to temperance and cleanliness their salubrious qualities? Who appointed such invincible barriers to the rage of the destroying foe? The same God, my friends, that gives swiftness to an angel's wing, and strength to an angel's arm. Grateful, undoubtedly, should we be to him, for our preservation, but, not the less, if it were brought to us by those angels of Nature, those ministers of his, that do his pleasure, than if his hand were stretched out before our eyes, to smite the dark messenger of death, as he went forth on his fearful errand.

Suppose, again, that in returning from a voyage at sea, you had arrived so near the wished-for coast, that you could behold the well-known light, like a friendly guide, standing to bid you welcome home,—your thoughts turn to the fire-side of your family, you imagine the anxious hearts that are there waiting for your arrival; and your own, beats at the thought of soon leaping on shore, and embracing your friends; when, on a sudden, your ship strikes upon a rock; she reels under the blow, the dark waters threaten to swallow her in their deep abyss; despair sits upon every countenance; every arm is paralyzed, every heart is faint, and you give up all for lost; but at the moment, you are most in danger, an unexpected movement takes place, a new impulse is given to your strong vessel, and she rides nobly over the dashing waves, unharmed. A miracle of mercy, you cry; and then, you cannot but acknowledge the care of Providence, as you recount the perils you have escaped, to those, who listen to your tale. If ever a feeling of gratitude to God is excited, it is at the moment, when you feel that you are

safe in the bosom of your family, and recal the dangers you have passed. But why should not the emotion of gratitude, which is so appropriate now, have been felt before? Why should you be so strongly impressed, with the sense of what you call, the special interposition of God, when you have given no attention to his constant protecting power? Was not the care of God over your vessel, as she floated peacefully upon the smooth waters? Is not his providence, ten thousand times more visible, when you come to consider it, in the arrangements, by which a ship is borne in safety over the wide weltering sea, than in the single act, by which it is rescued from impending ruin? Can you see the divine care, in that wild and wrathful moment, when the yawning deep threatens to receive you, and not see it, in the pleasant and quiet hours, when your ship glides over the waters, as if it enjoyed their mild and peaceful beauty? Is it not the Providence of God, which gives to the gnarled oak, its strength and endurance? Does not he rear the lofty pine in the depths of the distant wood? Are not all the trees of the forest his? Are they not rocked by his winds, watered with his showers, fed by the atmosphere and the earth which he has made? Is it not he, who has concealed the strong ore in the dark places of the mine? Has not he given to the load-stone its power, and made the dumb magnet speak, to tell the benighted voyager, his wandering way? Is it not the Providence of God, that inspires the cunning artificer with skill, that nerves his arm with power, and enables him to form the unshapen wood, and the obstinate iron, into that greatest wonder of human invention, by

which the art of man triumphs over space and time, and makes the winds and waves of the everlasting ocean, subservient to his will? Here it is, my friends, that we may behold the visible and unceasing agency of God. We need not wait, till we fancy a direct interposition in our favor; for whether we notice it or not, the care of our Maker surrounds us as closely as the air we breathe, and like that, is present not merely in the tempest and whirlwind, but in the peaceful atmosphere and the whispering breeze.

Again, your gratitude to God may have been called forth, upon your recovery from a dangerous sickness. You were severely smitten by the hand of disease, your flesh and heart faltered, and you were apparently approaching an inevitable grave. But it pleased God to rebuke your malady and restore you to the friends who were daily watching for your departure. As you felt the joy of returning strength, as you walked forth in the free air and under the pleasant light of the open Heavens, your heart was filled with emotions of gratitude too deep for utterance, and you could not but ascribe your recovery to the providential interposition of the Almighty. You almost thought that a direct and signal manifestation of his power, had been vouchsafed in your behalf. But, while you were thus grateful for your restoration to health, should you not have acknowledged the Providence of God, in the means by which it was produced, rather than in any departure from the general laws of his government on your account? Was not the hand of your heavenly Father visible in all those beneficial arrangements, of which, perhaps, you took little notice, in your desire to magnify the direct

exertions of his power? Is it not God who gave to each medicinal plant its sanative qualities? Is not the healing mineral placed in the earth's dark caverns by his will? Can you not perceive his goodness in enduing with sagacity the physician's mind, in revealing the fearful mysteries of disease to instructed reason, in filling the human heart with a sympathy, that is never cold, and a tenderness, which never wearies, when there is a sick couch to watch over, and a sick friend to be ministered to? Are there no marks of a Divine Providence, in the power of endurance, with which the delicate frame of man is gifted; in the tenacity, with which it retains its hold on life, when human skill is unavailing, in the elastic vigor, with which it rises up from the shock of disease, rejoicing again to run its race? It is here, my friends, that you may behold the immediate operations of Omnipotence. You may look forth, with a devout and grateful eye, upon the appointments of your Maker, and while you enjoy the blessings, which proceed from them yourselves, may rejoice, that others can also participate in their bounty.

I have thus suggested some hints respecting the general laws of Providence, for which we should bless God at all times, instead of waiting for the special interpositions of his will. Let me now ask you, to look for a moment, at the evils of forgetting the universal Providence of God, in hope of enjoying a peculiar manifestation of it for ourselves.

If we are accustomed to consider the Divine hand, only in special interpositions, our connexion with the Deity appears too fortuitous and unreal. It places him at a distance from us in the common events of life, and

reveals his presence only on those extraordinary occasions, which may rarely occur. It introduces great uncertainty and confusion into our ideas of the relation we sustain to God. Since it is impossible for us to tell, that a special interposition has at any time, taken place; whereas, the general course of Providence is constant and regular; we can always rely upon it, and can always be sure, that it is ordered by the will of God.

Again, the habit of seeking special interpositions in our behalf, leads us to attach too great importance to ourselves. If permitted to be cherished, with earnest conviction, it soon becomes an exclusive and selfish passion. In strong minds, it rises to a stern fanaticism, and in weak minds degenerates into a puerile superstition. In both cases the subjects of it are led to regard themselves as the peculiar favorites of the Almighty, on whose account the laws of nature may be suspended, and for whose benefit the arm of the Lord is made bare. But who are we, presumptuous mortals, that the agencies of the Universe, must be modified to suit our convenience? Shall our conviction or caprice, our pleasure or our pride, be consulted in the operation of those immutable laws, 'to which all things in heaven and in earth should do homage?' Are we of such consequence, as individuals, that whenever we involve ourselves in difficulty by our own ignorance, heedlessness, or folly, the great order of the Universe must be stopped for our deliverance? As well might the bewildered traveller in the midnight wood, expect a 'thousand liveried angels,' from their shining seats to guide him on his way.

Once more the habit of looking for special interpositions of Providence has a tendency to diminish our respect for the general laws, which govern the Universe. If we suppose that the chief blessings which our heavenly Father bestows, come to us in the form of direct manifestations, we shall acquire the habit of disregarding those salutary and beautiful arrangements, which it is our highest wisdom to learn, and our principal duty to observe. We are bound, by our very nature, and our relations to the Universe and to God, to submit to the laws, which he has established for our government. We best show our gratitude, by thankfulness for these laws. We best show our piety, by obedience to them. But these sentiments are weakened by indulging the idea, that a special interposition may take place on our behalf, to shield us from the evils, that result from their violation. Thus, men often place themselves in situations in which their health and life are exposed, thinking that because, they are in the discharge of their duty, they shall be shielded from danger, by a direct act of Providence. But, is it not better, if we are placed in such scenes, to acknowledge the danger, and to meet it like men, than to suppose, that God will turn aside his laws, on our account? Is it not better to admire those immutable provisions, which give strength in the hour of trial, confidence in peril, and an immortal hope in death, than to imagine a temporary provision to be made, according as we may fancy that we need? . Yes, brethren, let us be grateful to God, that we are placed in a Universe of established laws, that the Almighty has regulated all things by weight and measure, and made everything

beautiful in its place, so that if we conform to the order of his Providence, the appointments of his will, we need not ask that the heavens should be opened to give us bread, or that the rock should pour forth water, at the prophet's touch, since God has covered the valleys with corn, and sends rain upon the earth from his treasures.

Sustained and blessed as we are, at all times, by such a universal and benignant Providence, we have reason, brethren, at all times, for praise and thanksgiving to the Giver of every good. We have reason, under all circumstances, and in every situation, to rejoice that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. We need not wait to discover, whether any remarkable interposition has been vouchsafed to our weakness or our wants, for the most remarkable interposition took place, when God spake, and it was done, when he commanded, and it stood fast, and this broad and fruitful earth, was prepared as a dwelling place for man.

In the regular course of the divine government, it may be, that you have experienced disappointment and trial. But does that prevent you from blessing the Lord at all times, and having his praise continually in your mouth? As you look round upon the circle of your friends, you find it broken in upon, by the inexorable destroyer, and many are absent, whom you would wish to see. But were they not taken, in conpliance, with those laws, which God hath established, for the good of man? Would you have had those laws suspended, on your account? Should you dare to ask, that you might be exempt from their operation? And

how many blessings have they still left to you? How many more have they spared, than they have taken? How much more in every respect, have they given you, than they have deprived you of!

If as you call your families around you, you miss the familiar faces, which you once loved, and are reminded, that with some there will be no more friendly meetings on earth, remember that they were taken, in the course of divine Providence, by that law, which ordains to man a sphere of existence beyond the grave. You would not have that law annulled. You would not have it interrupted to suit your wishes or your will. For it is the source of some of the choicest blessings, which man enjoys. It is the foundation of our most elevated affections, our dearest sympathies, and our holiest hopes. Let us then, accept the dispensations of our heavenly Father. Let us acquiesce in the blessed arrangements, he has made for our happiness and improvement. Let us fulfil our trusts, as sustaining a part, in the great plan of His government, without seeking a partial and irregular interposition for ourselves. Let us rejoice and be glad that all things are appointed by his Providence and that all the appointments of his Providence are good.

SERMON III.

BY REV. ALVAN LAMSON, DEDHAM.

MORAL INFLUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY.

REV. II. 10.—BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE.

WERE we asked to state in few words, in what we conceive the chief excellence, power, worth of Christianity to consist, we know not that we could better reply than by saying, In the views it unfolds of the future life of man—of the soul's immortality—its undying capacities of virtue, enjoyment and suffering. It has brought life and immortality to light. It teaches, undoubtedly, other doctrines of immense importance, but these, if we mistake not, will be found to derive their principal greatness and value from their connexion with that of the soul's imperishable essence, power of improvement, moral freedom, and accountableness. That the universe has a Father, that he is one, infinite, that he encompasses us with his presence and love, that he regards our wants, weaknesses, and sufferings, that he is attentive to our prayers, and not one contrite tear is shed, nor sigh is breathed, in vain, that without his knowledge not a hair of our head perishes, is a concep-

tion as full of consolation as of sublimity, and this conception we owe to Christianity. But let us suppose for a moment, that this care is only temporary, that death is an annihilation of our being, that the soul then loses its consciousness forever—upon this supposition how much of its dignity, how much of its interest, does the belief of God's paternal character and providence lose! But regard the spirit of man as immortal, regard it in whatever form of being it may hereafter exist, as still surrounded by its God, still with its Father, still an object of his protection and love, and admitted to a union with him more intimate than is known to earthly natures, how does the conception alluded to become ennobled! It is not that the Infinite One watches over us now, that he takes care for our life, that he is present to help our infirmities, and strengthen our hearts in the hour of trial,—it is that he will continue to care for us forever, that he will be with us when flesh and sense shall fail, that he will conduct us through the shadowy valley, and be the friend and portion of our spirits through eternity,—it is this which gives to the doctrine of his paternal love its weight, its influence, its quickening and consoling power.

The teachings of Jesus all have reference to the immortality of the conscious, thinking principle within us, and the retributions of sin and holiness as connected with it. Take away this doctrine, and we say not that Christianity would not be a blessing, but it would not be the great blessing it now is. It would be divested of its most precious feature. All that is of most worth in it would be annihilated, and its influence would be poor and insignificant.

The future existence of man had been the conjecture of philosophy, and at times the hope of the dying, before the star of Christianity arose. But besides that it wanted the confirmation of a direct revelation, the belief of it was mixed up with so many low and absurd views, that its moral influence must, in all cases, have been exceedingly feeble. The pervading principle or sentiment of the religions of the ancient world was inadequate or false. They received, unquestionably, large embellishments from a poetic imagination, but they had in the main a political purpose. If they were not the inventions of lawgivers, they were instruments in their hands, and were used by them chiefly as the means of enforcing the practice of virtue as beneficial to human society on earth. The belief of a state of rewards and punishments hereafter was inculcated as lending a sanction to human laws. The good of the present life was its end,—we may say, its ultimate and sole end. To prepare the soul for a pure and spiritual life above, was not the primary, it was hardly even a secondary object of those religions. This is a conception, which seems not to have entered the human mind, until unfolded by Christianity, of which as already intimated, it is the great and all pervading principle. The difference between the two objects is very striking and important, and mainly accounts, we think, for the immense superiority which Christianity possesses, in regard to moral influence, over all the religions which had before appeared in the world. They were viewed simply as subsidiary to the designs of the civil magistrate. They had, as we have said, a political purpose. They aimed solely to confer a present good on society, and hence they concerned themselves little with the

heart and affections. They denounced the vengeance of the gods against crimes chiefly detrimental to the community; they enjoined a coarse sort of justice, patriotism, active courage, and other similar qualities; but meekness, self-denial, chastity of thought, heavenly mindedness, and other graces of the spirit, affections essential to the soul's health and enjoyment, were almost entirely overlooked.

The Elysium of the ancients was as different as possible from the heaven of the Christian. The former was reserved exclusively for those who had been distinguished by prowess or skill, by feats of arms, or dazzling qualities of genius. It wa the abode of heroes, legislators, poets, and sages, of those the world calls great, and not of the virtuous and despised poor. These views Christianity reverses. It teaches us to feel very little reverence for mere earthly greatness. It furnishes a new standard of worth, which the world is yet slow to acknowledge. It exalts the humble and contrite in heart, the pure, the peaceable, the benevolent, the faithful to duty and to conscience. On these it bestows the rewards of the life to come. These possess in its view the only true nobility, and they shall 'be called great in the kingdom of heaven.'

Christianity thus teaches not simply the fact that we shall live forever. It labors to imbue the soul with that virtue, to excite and strengthen in it those affections, which constitute its preparation for never ending felicity.

Having offered this explanation of the christian doctrine of immortality, we are prepared to proceed to the main purpose of our discourse, which is to illustrate its legitimate influence,—to show the effect which the

consciousness of possessing within us an immortal principle should produce on our views, feelings, occupations, and mode of life.

The first and chief effect is, that it gives us a just conception of the dignity and worth of the soul, and this conception is the germ of all virtue and improvement.

The soul is immortal; its power of progress, its susceptibility of pleasure and pain, the influence of its present acts, of the principles with which it becomes imbued, of its habits and attainments, are immortal. Is there any consideration which is more fitted to impress us with its value, to fill us with concern for its interests, to render us anxious to fly that sin which blights and destroys it, and secure that virtue which contributes to its exaltation and felicity through all coming time? Its energies of thought, its power of investigating, of accumulating, and applying truth, its capacity of scientific researches by which it is enabled to reveal the great planetary laws and influences, and lay open to its view worlds and systems stretching through the immensity of space, its skill to invent, to combine and embellish, the phenomena of the moral faculty, of conscience, that vicegerent of the Divinity within the breast,—fill us with admiration for their greatness. We contrast them with the powers of inanimate or brute natures, and we discover in them an extent, excellence, and sublimity approaching the divine. But let it be assumed, that these energies like the fleshly tabernacle in which they are lodged, are of only transient duration, that they are soon to be crushed forever beneath the iron hand of the destroyer, that those powers,

so noble, capable of such diversified attainments, such beneficent action, are after a few more revolutions of the sun to perish, that their light is but a 'meteor gleam,' that death, which wraps the body in darkness, also consigns the mind to a state of everlasting sleep, how would our reverence for human nature, and the human faculties be diminished! We should no longer feel that the soul possessed all imaginable worth. Our motives to earnest and unremitted effort for intellectual and moral improvement would be greatly impaired, I had almost said would be extinguished. We should no longer fe l sin to be that momentous evil we are now taught to regard it, or virtue that precious and sublime good. All purity and love, all impurity and hate, would in a short time be alike hidden in the insatiable grave, and they who should labor most to enlarge their understandings with knowledge, and enrich their natures with all godlike and benevolent affections, would feel that they were only furnishing a costlier victim for the tomb.

It is the feeling, the assurance, that our conscious natures will be forever retained, that our faculties are all progressive, that after millions and millions of ages shall have rolled away, they will be found still travelling on; that our capacities of intellectual and moral gratification will be forever enlarging, that our sensibility to pain, to suffering, and shame, will grow in corresponding proportion; that as the soul is now free,—as in every good work wrought in it, it is itself an agent, and the chief agent, so it will always be, its happiness or misery will depend on its own act; that if it sin it will be punished with an inward fear and torment, and if it be holy, it

will be rewarded with an inward tranquillity and joy,—it is this assurance, the assurance of the immortality of the powers and affections of the soul, which is the source of our chief reverence for it, and of the chief solicitude we should feel for its moral condition and prospects. I say, should feel; that it is not felt as it ought to be, is most certain. If we look abroad upon the world, we discover but too much evidence that by vast multitudes the future is unheeded. Their views, anxieties, hopes, and fears are bounded by present gratification. They remain unmoved by the changes which are perpetually going on around them. Time, the great teacher, which has conducted all past generations to the tomb, and is fast bearing their souls on to that world whence none return, speaks to their hearts in vain. They gaze on monuments of decay and death, they behold all terrestrial things moulder and turn to dust, yet a change comes not 'over the spirit of *their* dream.' Their hearts, their hopes, their aims are essentially earthly.

How is this to be explained? How but upon the principle that no real and deep conviction of the dignity and excellence of the soul, founded on a consciousness that its faculties and affections are immortal, is felt. This then we are to seek—a deep conviction that we partake of an imperishable essence, that we shall live, feel, and act forever; that our relations to a future and invisible state, to eternity, are far more important than our relations to earth, and to time. Having this conviction full and strong we shall be at no loss to comprehend the meaning of our Lord when he uttered such precepts as the following;—'Labor not for the meat

which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life.' 'What doth it profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' 'Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do, but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' Dread not greatly any outward and temporary evil, but rather dread the evil of sin. Dread its inward stain, its all-blighting power. Fear to degrade by guilty courses that nature which bears the glorious image of the Divinity, which contains in itself a principle of immortal life and vigor. Labor earnestly that it may be filled with a virtue, peace, and joy, which shall endure while the throne of God shall stand.

That self-respect, which is produced by a belief of the soul's immortality, is in itself no mean incentive to right and noble action. It is a mistake to suppose that a low estimate of the dignity of human nature is favorable to virtue. It rather tends to produce the debasement it supposes. Convince a person that his nature is wholly corrupt, his will and affections radically depraved, that he brings into the world with him a character which assimilates him to demons, you have destroyed one of the noblest germs of moral improvement; you have taught him to feel contempt for his own nature; you have filled his mind with despondency and gloom. So convince him that in regard to the duration of his several faculties he has no pre-eminence over the beasts which perish, in the same proportion you have weakened his inducements to watchfulness, self-denial, and effort; for you have taught him that the distinctions of virtue and vice are equally transient with those out-

ward advantages and evils, to which as immortal beings we are required to attach little importance. You have taught him to think meanly of his privileges and endowments as a child of God; you have chilled his enthusiasm, lowered and confined his aspirations and hopes. You have caused him to feel that he is a mere son of earth, and as such he will live, as the creature of a day, not the heir of eternity. Worthy actions spring from worthy thoughts of the rank and dignity of our nature. This truth deduced from reason and observation is perpetually recognised by the scriptures, particularly of the New Testament, which constantly appeal to our sense of the worth of the soul as possessing a principle of undying consciousness. There is no feeling of our nature, in fact, which Christianity addresses more frequently than that of self-respect founded on a persuasion that we possess within us immortal energies. Our spirits, we are taught, are God's temples, not perishable and crumbling as these earthly fabrics we bear about with us, but ever-during, and as such we should labor to preserve them undefiled.

Again, in illustrating the moral influence of a belief of the soul's immortality, we must not forget to observe that this belief, and this alone, enables us to form a just estimate of the present scene, with all its labors, cares, joys and sorrows. No judgment we pass on them can be correct, which has not a special and constant reference to the powers and susceptibilities of the thinking, indestructable principle within us. Thus all earthly good dwindles into utter insignificance, when we reflect that it is at best a momentary possession; that its lustre will soon depart; the illusion which binds our

affections to it will be speedily dissipated; that not a joy of sense, not a trace of outward beauty, not a badge of our worldly honors, not a note of human flattery, not a particle of the gold we heap up, will remain. Nothing of all we now admire, of all which soothes our vanity, or gratifies pride, can we take with us. Only the soul with its affections will survive the stroke of death, and if it be not clothed with the christian graces, then indeed shall we be found 'poor, and miserable, and blind and naked.' Equally transient, I had almost said equally insignificant, are the sorrows of life, viewed in connexion with the eternity which succeeds. They will soon flee away as shadows before the morning dawn. Only their happy effects, if they have been met as they ought to be, will abide, when the feverish dream of life is over. These will abide, for affliction is not a child of earth, and not earthly is her voice.—But on these familiar topics we forbear to enlarge. The spirit in which the belief of a future and interminable being forms a deep and pervading sentiment, is elevated above the world, its fears, its flatteries, its smiles, its frowns.

The soul is the standard of man's greatness and worth, and whatever improves and exalts this, is to be, 'more than life pursued,' and whatever harms it to be shunned 'more than death.' Be it foolish mirth, be it pleasure, be it empty, heartless amusement, be it subserviency to the laws of fashion, be it the jealous pursuit of wealth, power, or fame; be it, to adopt the expression of our Saviour, 'love of father, or love of mother,' be it what is more dear to us than a right hand or a right eye,—all is to be disregarded, all postponed

to the obligation of duty, to the spirit's purity, soundness, and virtue.

We have said that the christian doctrine of immortality, and that alone, teaches the worth and excellence of the soul, and that a consciousness of these constitutes the principle of all true virtue and improvement; that reverence for ourselves founded on such consciousness is one of the most effectual safeguards against impurity and sin, and one of the noblest incentives to right action; that we can form a correct estimate of the world, and the good and evil it presents, only when we remember that our connexion with it is uncertain and temporary, that the spirit has energies which shall continue when this connexion is dissolved, and which shall never be annihilated. Thus life has a serious object. That object is the education of the soul for immortal felicity, and we are false to ourselves, false to our own undying nature and capacities, if we neglect it, preferring the gain of the world to the soul's health and safety.

Such should be the moral influence of a conviction of the spirit's immortality. It should inspire courage in our warfare with sin, and strength in every earthly trial. It should render us pure, benevolent, meek and heavenly, attentive to the progressive nature of our faculties, and perpetually anxious for improvement. If it produce not this effect, we repeat, it is because the conviction is not sufficiently strong and constant.

There is another mode in which a belief of our immortality should exert an influence not only to soothe and console the spirit, but to quicken and exalt our virtue. It is through the agency of the affections. These,

our tenderness, our love, are not buried in the grave which receives a friend's lifeless form. They survive. They give us a keen sense of affliction, but through them too we are consoled, through them our characters are purified and exalted. The soul, it may be, is at first stunned by the magnitude or suddenness of its affliction. It feels a sensation of anguish and desolation beyond the power of utterance. When those, who have entwined themselves with our strongest and tenderest affections, are removed from our presence, we are conscious of a void, which nothing is for a time capable of filling. We seem to have surrendered part of ourselves, part of our own existence. The melancholy of our feelings throws a gloom over surrounding nature. Our sorrow is augmented by all which reminds us of the lost one, all familiar scenes and objects, for all are associated in our minds with the form which is now missed. Nor is our grief altogether selfish. It is true, we think of the comforts which have fled, and the hopes which have been buried in the tomb. We think of our clouded prospects, of the melancholy, which threatens to tinge all our future days. On our own account we mourn for the departed. We feel their death to be an affliction to ourselves; we are apt in the first moments of bitterness to view it as an affliction to them, and without the faith of the Christian, it would be difficult to find any effectual alleviation or comfort. Apply to nature, she utters scarcely a whisper of consolation. All of death which is visible to the eye tends to inspire dread and gloom. Its fixed and chilling look sends a blight to the heart. It strikes its victims at our side; as we convey their altered and insensible

forms to their last resting place there to be laid away from our sight forever, all to the ear of sense seems to hold the language of despair. No accents of comfort break the silence of the tomb. All is stillness there Nothing there tells us that the whole being is not extinct in death. Nothing there whispers us that when we lay down in the cold earth all of us which is earthly, we do not lose our conscious natures. Nothing there addresses us in the soothing language; Dismiss your grief; your apprehension and solicitude for the dead are vain; they need not your sympathy, for they have no sorrows now. They have gone where they are happier than the lot of humanity allowed while they remained with you. They would not return to this world of imperfection, suffering, and sin, if they could. No. Nature utters no such healing sounds. The grave closes over its recent tenant, the funereal train in slow and solemn step moves off, and the untaught heart shuddering asks if all ends there. The scene is saddening to sense. Reason attempts to offer some alleviating reflections, but imperfectly succeeds. Her best suggestions are unsatisfactory, cold, and feeble. They remove not our anxiety for those who are lost from our view. The heart is still pierced and torn with grief and fear.

Such, without the confirmation which our religion gives of the soul's immortality, would be the desolation of heart, and such the sorrow and apprehension with which we should commit the remains of a friend to the tomb. From these feelings we are, as Christians, saved. We cannot indulge them, for we mourn not as others who are without hope. We regard the virtuous objects

of affection, who are gone from our sight, as still alive, still happy, as advanced to a state of enjoyment which transcends our present powers of conception. Thus is the sting of death taken away, and the grave forever disarmed of its terrors. More than this, there is an influence of the virtuous dead upon the living, a regenerating, an ennobling influence, for from the region of spirits they yet speak. They speak by their examples which they have left as a legacy to survivors yet struggling on through the difficult paths of earth. But what is more important than this, they cause a transfer of our affections from this to the invisible world. We no longer regard it as a strange land. There are the spirits with which we have been familiar; whom we held dear. There are beings like ourselves, with whom we have conversed; who have borne with us the trials of earth: who have had common feelings and anxieties. There are friends and kindred. Thither our treasures have been conveyed before us that we might be the more willing to go. The hope of once more regaining them, of being united to the friends we have lost, is not a more consolatory, than it is a purifying and elevating principle. Our horror of death is softened, for we can look across the gulph and behold those who have crossed it before waiting to receive us. We feel that we have but one enemy to dread, and that is sin, moral defilement. That, and that alone, has power to banish us from the happy society of heaven. We are convinced that to be united with the pure, we must be ourselves pure. How then must we feel our virtuous ardor renewed, and the spirit strengthened in every holy purpose!

What is the charm which binds our spirits to earth? What is it which spreads such gloom over the parting hour? One of the circumstances which render it so painful to take our final leave of the world, is the severing of the ties of friendship and kindred. We must part with those we love. Could we take them with us we feel perhaps, that we should be less reluctant to go. But we have already parted with many of them. Every year they are falling away and fading from our sight. If we survive to advanced age, it is to witness the gradual disruption of the ties which connect us with earth. Our friends are one after another transplanted, and we feel that while detained here, we are absent from our country and home. Such is the benevolent provision of Providence to wean our affections from the present scene, and slope our passage to the tomb. By such influences it prepares the spirit cheerfully to forsake her tenement of clay, and take her upward flight.

We hear of the 'communion of saints,' and the doctrine rationally explained, is a pleasing and salutary one. The pure and good of all ages form one body, one society, embracing those below and those above, the company of the visible and the invisible. Between these there exists a bond of union, a consent, and harmony. For virtuous minds wherever they exist, and however separated by time or space, are of one class, are assimilated and connected by peculiar affinities. On earth, in heaven, they form one family, the celestial part of which is constantly receiving accessions from the terrestrial.—It is pleasing to believe that between these parts there is a mutual sympathy. Those who have gone before us, are anxiously, it may be, watching over

us. They are tracing the path we tread; they mark with sorrow our deviations, and rejoice at every approach we make to heavenly excellence. Is this mere imagination? It is certainly a cheering and ennobling sentiment, and we can hardly persuade ourselves that it has no foundation in reality. But whatever be the powers and occupations of the departed, we cannot as Christians, avoid regarding ourselves as forming with them one company, though now separated by the accidents of mortality, and we must be unfortunate indeed if the hope of a union sends no healing and invigorating influence to the heart.

These are views with which we cannot be too familiar, for they bear the thoughts above, they bring a remedy to grief, and urge us forward in the heavenly path.

SERMON IV.

BY REV. DAVID DAMON, AMESBURY.

HUMAN LIFE A TALE.

PSALM XC. 9.—WE SPEND OUR YEARS AS A TALE THAT IS TOLD.

Among all the striking similitudes by which human life is represented in Scripture, there is none which seems to me more striking than this,—simple, familiar, trite, as it is. I do not know that there can be a more complete representation of the brevity and insignificance of the life of man,—*a tale that is told.* I doubt not I shall be here understood as I mean, the *comparative* brevity and insignificance of our lives; for the life of man is both long and important compared with the life of an insect. But we are not to suppose that the most minute of the ephemeral insects, whose existence the microscope reveals, is absolutely insignificant,—made in vain; much less man, considered in all his relations to the past and the future, his own species, and the universe of created beings; the earth on which he dwells now, and the spiritual world in which he is to exist forever. Still there are aspects innumerable, in which the whole life of an individual on the earth, is as a tale that is told; and so also we spend the successive years which constitute our earthly existence. I do not propose to

cause all these aspects to pass before you, and ask you to consider them. If it were possible to present them all, it would be like the images reflected by the Camera Obscura, w en painted figures are passed rapidly through it. The brilliancy of one would quickly efface the recollection of another. I do not propose to trace minutely the points of resemblance between the years of our lives and a tale that is told. It would be but telling this same tale in an indefinite variety of ways. My object will be to present only a few views, which may lead us to serious and profitable reflections and practical results.

1. The whole life of an individual is like a tale that is told, to his posterity and his successors. What is biography but a tale, or collection of tales, which must be brief and piquant to excite and sustain interest, and make an impression? The longest life, spent in the most important duties, in the most important stations, furnishes comparatively few incidents, which posterity can endure to have repeated in minute detail. The story must be hurried through, as one incident in real life crowds upon another; else it will make no impression, and scarcely gain a patient hearing. It will bear but few repetitions. It hastens to the great gulf of oblivion, which swallows down and never disgorges the incidents which recently agitated a world, and the memory of minds which in the zenith of their living power and light, could move and dazzle millions of men.

There is certainly not a more delusive vanity on earth, however common it may be, than the vanity of expecting that one's name and character and deeds will be long and extensively in the minds and mouths of

men, after one is dead. The expectation, in most instances, is as unreasonable and absurd, as it would be to suppose that the whole world will soon be seized with a mania to know the names of all the soldiers in Cæsar's army, and repeat them daily. It is the lot of very few even of extraordinary men to be long or extensively remembered. A man may have a mind which never errs in its reasonings, where it is possible for humanity to avoid error, a courage which never quails, a fortitude which never sinks, a patriotism as pure burning within his breast, as fire from heaven, a piety which is never questioned while he lives, a benevolence which is never wearied, and he may do deeds upon which nothing less than the salvation of his country is made to turn, and yet be totally forgotten, and his name never named again, in a few generations after his decease. How is it then that the lives of ordinary men should be anything more when they are spent, than a tale a few times told, but little heeded, and soon quite forgotten? A good and useful man, useful in his place and station, may well expect that his memory will be cherished by his children and others who have known him personally, that he will be sometimes spoken of by his descendants and the descendants of his neighbors, for a few generations more, and that what he has said and done and suffered in his day may go to swell a little, but how little he knows not, the amount of mental and moral influences which will act upon men, after his name and memory are wholly forgotten. But this is all of the kind which he may expect, and perhaps as much as he may virtuously desire. Here, *probably*, is the extent to which his story will distinctly reach; and it will be but a

told tale in its proper legitimate domain and influence. It will possess but an occasional, transitory, feeble, interest, often pushed aside by trivial present incidents, and pushed into oblivion at last, with none to relate the manner of the catastrophe. All this is certain, if we may reason concerning the future from the present and the past,—if there is anything uniform in the current of events, upon which we may lay our grasp, and reason from it, with the least confidence in our own conclusions.

2. The past portion of life seems to the individual himself, while living, as a tale which is told,—whether he be twenty or forty years of age, or three-score years and ten. Probably the past portion of life seems nearly as long, and quite as significant and important to the youth of twenty, as to any who live. The past portion of our lives is as a tale that is told, as it respects both its brevity and its significance.

Can any of you, my Christian friends, possibly make it seem to you that you have lived so long as you have lived?—through so many years, so many revolving seasons, so many summers and winters, so many long summer days and long winter nights, such an immense number of days in the whole—three hundred and sixty-five, multiplied so many times,—such an incredible number of hours,—many of which seemed so long and dreary, while they were passing, and whose end was so impatiently looked for? You can realize all this as an arithmetical question, but can you possibly realize it in any other shape? Can you make it seem to you anything more than a brief tale or drama consisting of a few brief acts?

Again,—can you possibly clothe the past with the attributes of significance and importance? Can you make your past life appear to be anything more than a mass of dreamy recollections? Can you remember what you have said and done daily? Have you been doing anything at all, the greater part of the time? Doubtless you have; but how does it seem to you now? Do you remember what you have been doing? Do you see its amount? Do you perceive its effects? Do you distinctly realize anything from it or concerning it?

No doubt you recollect some things which you have said and done; and some things which have been said and done to you; but can you bring up the feelings and emotions which accompanied the things which are past, when those things were present? Can you possibly realize those things to have been of any considerable importance? Can you feel your feelings over again, so as to obtain a distinct consciousness now, that the past has had a being which once seemed pregnant with unutterable destiny? No, you cannot. Part has faded, and the rest is fading. The outlines are like those which are presented in a dream, or those which imagination and not experience has drawn. The whole seems but a tale which has been told, and which will not serve to be told many times more.

Sometimes recollection may flash over the mind, like lightning athwart the midnight clouds, and present something with perfect distinctness, as it was when it was a reality. But the moment we attempt to grapple it to make it our own again,—to examine it that we may ascertain if it is the self same thing come back; and whether we can ponder and feel and enjoy it all, as it is

for the instant certain to us we once did,—the moment we attempt this, it has escaped. It has gone. It has vanished as completely as do the fabled ghosts at day-dawn. The barren recollection which remains, when the bright vision is gone, is like the attention we are sometimes obliged to bestow upon the same story told for the hundredth time; and we are glad to escape from it as quickly as possible, though we should find no better substitute to which we may turn our attention, than wild musings and puerile castles in the air.

The remembrances which griefs and wrongs and sufferings and sins impress upon the imperishable tablets of the soul, seem to be the only ones which need neither brush nor varnish, which come when we bid them and when we bid them not, and tarry when we bid them go, and which suffer us not to doubt that we have had being,—that our life, if it has been a dream, has been, at least at times, a troubled dream,—and that the tale which never ceases to have interest, though it should be many times told, must have a portion of the terrible or the heart-piercing in it. Is not such man's past life, as it exists in his present conceptions and remembrance?

3. The brevity, the insignificance, the story-like character of the remaining portion of our lives on earth is not so directly obvious,—is more a matter of reasoning and inference, and takes not the same hold upon the imagination, or certainly not in the same way and to the same extent. We readily invest the future, especially in youth, with very great importance, we make it seem longer than the reality, particularly at the same period of life,—and indefinitely longer than equal por-

tions seem when past. But still, we know that the future must be, as the past has been, brief; and must seem briefer than the reality when it becomes a portion of the past; and those of us who have reached or passed the meridian of life, can realize, to a certain extent, that the future, in all human probability, cannot be fraught with more important consequences than equal portions taken from the past. Therefore we can realize even now, what we shall probably better realize soon, that our whole life is, in many respects, as a tale which is told.

4. We spend the successive years of our lives—spend the time as we pass along—as a tale that is told,—that is, our interest in life at any present given moment, is like the interest in a tale, a narrative, a fiction. We are not interested in proportion to the real importance of present occupations and events; but in proportion to what may be termed their dramatic character, as they present themselves to the imagination;—just as our interest in a narrative or tale is not in proportion to the importance of the facts which are related or disclosed, but varies with the manner of the relation, and a variety of extrinsic circumstances. We are agitated, convulsed, carried away, by present circumstances, objects, and real or imagined interests, for all which we shall care nothing,—upon which we shall scarcely bestow an after thought, a little while hence, unless it be a thought of wonder at ourselves, that we concerned ourselves so much in circumstances and events, which did not concern us; and cared so much for those, who had neither care nor concern for us, nor acknowledged relation to us. Our minds are occupied with the present,

with a few occasional musings upon the past and a few occasional and perhaps wilder musings upon the future; but it is the present which is suffered to exercise a sort of omnipotent control over most minds—an all-absorbing interest—like that excited for the time being for the relation or representation of a well arranged fiction. And often it is fiction, and often that which is no better than fiction, which engrosses the intellect and the heart, and moves the energies of the whole man;—mere trifles,—or things irrevelant to the great business and real purposes of our lives. And so we go on, wondering how we could have been so insignificantly amused in times past, so insignificantly employed, so foolishly agitated, so cheated of time, means, and opportunities for doing substantial things, and attaining substantial good; but all the while as insignificantly amused and employed, as foolishly agitated, and as much self-deceived and cheated as we ever were before.

It by no means follows from what has been said in this discourse, that we are not to ponder the past, be interested in the present, and permit hope to spread her bright and beautiful colorings over the future. What I have stated above, are regularly recurring facts, having their origin and basis in unalterable principles of human nature,—principles whose legitimate workings are no more to be argued against than the downward course of the streams of water. But as we may divert a stream, from its old channel, whither it may do much more in fertilizing the adjacent soil, though still flowing downward, so we may sometimes change and ought to change the channels of our thoughts, affections, and endeavors; and it does follow from what has been said

that there are certain great points, aspects and relations in human life which we ought frequently, seriously solemnly to consider; and so far as it may come within the scope of human effort, fix them as central points, around which the heart and intellect may revolve, and the energies from time to time disport and exhaust themselves, without escaping from the influence of their proper centre of attraction. In a word, we ought to reflect upon the great duties and purposes of life, upon the approaching termination of life, upon the assurance we have of a future life, and the character and conditions of the future life. It is by such reflections that we are to invest human life with the characteristics of an important reality—make it something different from and superior to a tale that is told, to which it is like in so many of its aspects,—and by discovering and attending to its most important relations, answer its great purpose. These are the serious reflections, and this the practical result, to which we are led by the views which have been presented of human life; and upon which it may be profitable for us to dwell a little longer.

The great purpose of our being is enjoyment,—not animal enjoyment, for this does not satisfy while it lasts, and must certainly cease with the present life;—but moral and intellectual enjoyment,—the felicity of moral and intellectual beings. The present life is the first and but a single stage in our being and progress. If this life were our all, it would be so much more like a tale which is told than it now is; that we might well stop where we now are: what has already been said would upon this supposition, be enough for profit, and more than could have been heard with pleasure. But we feel

from the innate aspirations of our souls, and trust in the immutable promise of God, that we shall live again and forever. Consequently this life is but one stage as well as the first stage in our being and progress. We are placed in a situation suited to the infancy, the first stage of our being, notwithstanding all its inconveniences, or what we deem such; and the great and ultimate end and purpose of our existence being moral and intellectual enjoyment, it follows that the great duty and business of this life must be moral and intellectual development and improvement. So far as this duty is performed and this improvement made, we are prepared to enter upon the next stage of our being, and receive an increase of our enjoyment which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived; but so far as this duty is neglected and left undone, and this improvement not made, we are unprepared to enter upon future happiness, and must inevitably suffer damage and loss in consequence, and have our portion assigned to us with evil, slothful, and unprofitable servants. We are to pursue, every one his own individual improvement and happiness,—moral and intellectual improvement and happiness, be it still, and be it always remembered. In this pursuit we are to endeavor to compass man's "chief end," In this pursuit we are to endeavor to "glorify God and enjoy him forever." But in thus pursuing, every one his individual aim and end, it does not follow that we may not be helpful to others in the same pursuit—and much less that our pursuit and attainments should hinder theirs. On the contrary, as social and mutually dependant beings, rivetted as it were to our immediate progenitors and successors, and really though

less closely united to all our race, present, past, and to be born, we promote our own good most, when we do most to promote the good of others,—when we profit most by those who have gone before us, and hand down most of what we have received of them, and what we have accumulated ourselves, to those who are coming after us.

But how are we to escape from the concerns of less moment which are continually urging and tempting us to spend our years as we do;—how are we to apply ourselves devotedly and continually to what has been pronounced the great duty of life, and the purpose and end of our whole being? It is not indeed always easy to be done. If it were, it could not be called the great duty of life; nor could high attainments in virtue be called a great achievement. But though arduous, it is possible. Something may be done,—much may be done sometimes, to give the mind and soul, the whole inner and outer man, the right bent towards the great purpose of rational and moral life, by deep determined reflection, in the light of God's word, upon our capacities and relations, our duties and our destination. Indeed it is by self-examination and deep reflection, followed by vigorous action and self-discipline that all is to be accomplished, so far as the accomplishment rests with us. In the vigorous performance of this task of self-inspection and discipline, we shall find some things which we must cease from doing, and bestow no farther thought or attention upon them; some things which we must do differently, that is, in a different spirit and from different motives; and many other things which should be left undone no longer. We shall find many thoughts

which we have not cherished, many subjects of profitable meditatation which we have not pursued, many moral exercises in which we have not engaged, or not engaged heartily, and many powers of the mind and soul which have not been brought into complete action.

In reflecting upon the brevity, the uncertainty, the great purpose and the great duties of this life, we should consider that the small portion which may remain of it, is yet long enough for life's purpose to be accomplished, if not another moment is lost. We should reflect with seriousness, with solemnity, and yet without superstitions or unchristian fears upon death which comes to all, and to many before they are prepared to meet it. We should reflect upon the assurances, the evidences, and the conditions of our future life,—the future state, of which it is probable we hear and say enough, but *think*, and therefore believe and anticipate too little. It is particularly advisable, at a time, when we have been contemplating the brevity of human life, under the similitude of a tale that is told, that we should reflect seriously upon the end of life—upon death. We should repeat our serious meditations upon death at regularly returning periods, particularly on entering upon a new year, and at every recurrence of a birth-day, when we finish a seventieth part of this life, reckoned by the years of those who live till the whole drama is enacted, and all the tale of life is lived and told, and enter upon another seventieth part, which may be our last, and more than our last.

We know that this life had a beginning, and must have an end. We know that we must die. One after another of our former acquaintances we have already

consigned to the dust. We look around for the companions of our youth; but they are gone. To the most aged, none of their youthful companions remain; to the rest of us, who have reached or passed the middle age, a minority only. Age steals on. Grey hairs appear upon us. Our children have risen up about us, like miracles of a new creation. They are already older than we were, when this dream of life begun, and we began to hear, and to fancy how like it is to a tale which is told. We have all of us said and thought, perhaps a thousand times, that life is like a vapor which appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away. We have likened human life, both in thought and in speech, to every thing which is frail in its nature, and transient in its duration. Every thing admonishes us that death is certain and near, and approaching nearer continually. And yet, after all, we do not realize this tenure and end of our present existence; but still walk in a vain show, pleasing and pleased with trifles, or vexing and vexed with trifles quite as vain, and perhaps more sinful. We still dream on and spend our years, as if privileged to repeat forever the tales of other's lives, and never to afford others the opportunity to tell our own—as if death, which is a reality to others, and the king of terrors, were but a phantom king to us,—or as if, though a reality and a monster in strength, when he is actually very near, we can easily hold him at a distance still, and as long as we please. So men live on and dream on, till after all, those who live long, very long, and have sometimes, and perhaps often, supposed they were about to die, are, it may be, surprized unexpectedly by death at last. I am not certain that death

does not generally come, in a measure, unexpectedly at last—at such an hour as men think not. Then they feel, when they see the departing hour has come, as if they desired to be more willing and more prepared, and would that the hasty summons had been preceded by a timely notice of its approach,—as if the long delay had been a little longer, that the last acts of resignation and preparation might have been performed better.

Such are perhaps, more particularly, the feeling of false security in life and the irrespective views of death which grow upon us, when life is permitted as it sometimes is, to flow along in a gentle and even current, and we have experienced no great trouble or changes, and there have been no great changes about us, and the destroying angel seems banished, for a season, to distant lands or places from which we hear not often, and with which we have not direct and constant intercourse. At such a time, how can we think of death!—or thinking of it, realize that it may be very near to some or to many of us—or if we realize this, how can we avoid yielding ourselves, at such a time, to unchristian fears, instead of entertaining serious, solemn, and salutary thoughts of death? And yet it is certain that death may be thus near to some, perhaps to many of us, and that the revolving months, which are next before us, may be as much distinguished for their mortality, as any which have preceded them have been for health and freedom from mortality; and for changes and convulsions in the world, as the preceding have been for a peaceful and even tenor. We ought, therefore, to think of death now; and yet not so much with the fears of men, as with the faith and hope of Christians; and not

so much because our thoughts in themselves will do us any good, especially if they terminate with the grave, as because suitable reflections upon this solemn subject will be likely to turn our thoughts next whither they should be turned, and fix them where they should be fixed, upon the great duties of life, and upon our hope, our belief, and the grounds of our hope and belief in the happiness of the life to come.

Let us, then, with the help of God, endeavor so to reflect, and so to turn and fix our thoughts; and God grant his blessing upon our endeavors, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

SERMON V.

BY REV. SAMUEL BARRETT, BOSTON.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU.

LUKE XVII. 20, 21.—AND WHEN HE WAS DEMANDED OF THE PHARISEES WHEN THE KINGDOM OF GOD SHOULD COME, HE ANSWERED THEM AND SAID, THE KINGDOM OF GOD COMETH NOT WITH OBSERVATION, NEITHER SHALL THEY SAY, LO HERE! OR LO THERE! FOR BEHOLD, THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU.

THE kingdom of God cometh not with observation; it is within you. Let these words guide our reflections. They remind us of an important principle. They suggest a great truth. They point to the chief good. We need to be often told of their import. Matter was made for mind, not mind for matter; we are apt to forget this. Christ's miracles were for his truth, and his truth was for moral effect. There are those who seem to reverse this order, and to think more of doctrine than of holiness, and more of the Saviour's power than of either. God's kingdom is not so much the extent, grandeur, and beauty of the external world, as it is the purity, intelligence, and moral excellence of the world man has within him. Many have deemed differently of it; and so overlooking the inward kingdom have bestowed their chief care on the outward. In

other words, multitudes have looked too much abroad and too little within themselves in respect to religion. This they have been disposed to place in something out of the soul, rather than in something that is and should be, in the soul. They have been slow to comprehend that the kingdom of God is within them, if any where for their good; slow to comprehend that so far from being what comes, as the Jews expected their kingdom would, arbitrarily, suddenly, with observation or visible display, so as to give occasion for the cry, "lo here, lo there,"—it is and ever must be the result of personal, inward, voluntary effort; gaining its establishment in the mind and heart, gradually, silently, in accordance with the fixed laws of human nature, and depending alike for its growth and permanence on the same faithful use of means as is requisite for the successful cultivation of any habit of thought, feeling, and conduct. This I said, men have been slow to comprehend. They have been still more so to apply it. How many in former times, how many in our own age, have not only believed and taught but practised, exactly as if religion,—instead of being, as it is, a conviction of the mind or a sentiment of the heart or a principle of action, in the first place, of just as natural a growth in the soul as any other, and in the second place, just as much requiring assiduous labor and watchful care for its culture and protection, as any other,—were something exotic; something not capable of being had in the usual way of mental and moral acquisition; something that he who is to have it will indeed obtain, but only from a foreign source; something that, when possessed, is distinct and separate from all things else pertaining to the man; something that, once

gotten, can never be lost; something too, that, so far from evidencing itself by the morality of the life, or strengthening itself by active exertion, or seeking to be its own reward, exhibits itself in trivial ceremonies, indulges itself in passive reveries, and looks for its requital in arbitrary compensations.

How fruitful of evils, my hearers, has been this false view of God's kingdom! How many pages might be filled with the record of them! and how many cautionary lessons would they not teach us!

I might remark on the undue stress men have laid on particular times for being religious, as if they supposed it was not required of them to be religious at all times; and from the prevalence of this error, I might take occasion to speak words of caution against attempting to compound for the relaxation of moral obligation by periodical devotions; against thinking to atone for habitual neglect of the kingdom within, by a scrupulous attention at stated seasons to the kingdom without.

I might dwell upon the disproportioned importance men have attached to consecrated places, as if some intrinsic sacredness belonged to them, insomuch that the Being who fills heaven and earth with his presence listens with greater complacency to prayers there offered up, than to others equally sincere and fervent, which ascend from spots unhallowed by formal ceremonies. And in view of this common mistake, I might be led by the fact that God's kingdom is not, as the Jews thought, restricted to particular localities, but is within the soul of every good man, wherever he may be—to explain how there cannot be a corner in the wide universe whence acceptable worship may not rise up to the Universal

Father; nor a human mind in that universe, which, if it be pure and devoted to goodness, is not a meet temple for the holy spirit to dwell in; nay, which is not one wherein that spirit does dwell.

I might advert to the disposition men have had to substitute the ritual of religion for its spirit; to put the instrument of holiness in the place of holiness itself; to cheat themselves into the belief that God is pleased with kneeling attitudes, uplifted hands, heaven-directed eyes, with pilgrimages and ordinances and ceremonies, whatever be the disposition of the heart and the qualities of the life. And in pursuing this topic, I might repeat what has been so often said, to show how all this is a gross perversion of the principles of God's kingdom; a preposterous change of the order of the divine appointments; a fatal mistake, which he who does not avoid puts his soul to great hazard.

I might speak of the many who in consequence of the same error respecting God's kingdom have been led to look for unauthorized helps from their minister; to rely on him not so much for that sort of aid which brother gives brother, in the work of elevating the thoughts, purifying the affections, and perfecting the character, as for assistance of quite another kind; that, I mean, of persuading the Deity to forgive sins unrepented of, of drawing down from him virtues and graces not toiled for, and of preparing souls for future bliss that take no pains to prepare themselves. And in reference to this and its kindred errors, I might insist on the doctrine of individual responsibleness; on the fact that every one stands or falls, under God, of his own strength or weakness; on the great truth that all, clergy and laity, are

equally answerable, in proportion to their respective powers, for the state of morals and religion in the community where they dwell.

I might pass to the topic of false reliance on Christ, showing as I proceeded in the discussion of it, how, by taking up a wrong theory of God's kingdom, men have gone on believing and teaching to little good practical purpose, respecting his sufferings and death, as if these were intended to have some outward efficacy; as if, for instance, they were designed to buy us off from a foreign foe, to quench divine wrath, to satisfy divine justice, to cancel the demands of the moral law on our race, to supply men's deficiences by a substitution of his own perfect righteousness. And in opposition to all this error, I might,—stating again and applying the great principle of God's kingdom, that it is within us, if we have any share in it, in us by virtue of our purity and piety consequent on a personal use of the truths and motives the Saviour has given us,—go on to prove that here is to be found the true and only reason of Christ's mission, viz. that he came to deliver us from ourselves, not from another; from the bondage of sin, not from that of an outward foe; from the misery of our own vices, not from the vindictive wrath of our Creator; that he came to make us do our own duty, not to perform that duty for us; to induce us to obey the law, not to answer the claims of that law himself; to prompt us to personal obedience, not to put his obedience in the place of our own; to quench the fire of bad passion burning within ourselves, not that of God's anger; to enthrone the principles of justice in human hearts, not to satisfy the divine justice; to win us to our heavenly Father,

who is, and always was, ready to pardon the returning sinner, not to alter the mind of Deity by paying him an equivalent for man's transgression; that he came, in fine, to destroy the kingdom of evil within us, and to establish there the kingdom of good, by giving us a religion replete with directions, motives, and all needed assistances, whereby we might subdue the power of sin, eradicate false sentiments, be filled with love to God, and love to man, and desires of duty, and thus be put in the way of working out our own salvation.

I might proceed to point out and enlarge on another mistake into which men, in relation to the general subject of this discourse, have fallen—a mistake touching the important topic of retribution, that, I mean, of regarding the kingdom of God as consisting so much in externals and so little in internals, that heaven and hell have come to be looked upon by many as objects of desire or aversion, chiefly for their locality and outward circumstances of convenience or inconvenience, rather than for the pleasure or pain springing naturally out of the inward condition of the soul. And in attempting to give a just view of this error and of its opposite truth, I might say, that though we may not be able, and should not perhaps desire it if able, to divest ourselves wholly of the idea of place and circumstance respecting our condition after death, yet that this idea of place and circumtances is not the one on which true views of God's kingdom should lead us chiefly to dwell; that, in fact, it is comparatively of little moment *where* we shall be, for the good may be happy, and the bad must be unhappy, anywhere; that what most concerns us is the state, the *condition* of soul we shall be in; that the kingdom of heaven

will be in us if we are holy, and the kingdom of hell will be in us if we are sinful; that on the one hand, that man cannot, in the nature of things, be other than an unhappy being, in whatever part of the universe placed, if he have within him a depraved disposition that is incapable of relishing goodness; a memory that tells him of a life spent in habitual transgression of God's law; a conscience he has a thousand times violated, and the reproving voice of which he cannot silence so long as he disobeys its injunctions; and that on the other hand, that man cannot, in the nature of things, but be a happy being, in whatever part of the universe a wise and good Father will place him, whose dispositions are right, whose conscience is clear, whose memory has recorded only virtuous deeds, who possesses all the ingredients of Christian character in due proportions,—thoughts that have a high and holy aim, affections that love to fasten themselves to whatever is pure and noble, and habits that yield spontaneously the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

These topics, and such as these, suggested by the spirit of my text, I might discuss at length; but in the presence of those whom I now address, it would be unnecessary. For who that listens to me has not long since discovered the errors to which I have adverted, and escaped, in a good measure, the practical evils to which they lead? Better, however, than my fears would be to me the assurance, that none of us are approaching the opposite extremes. What, brethren, can it profit us, if, in shunning the error of seeking to be religious only at stated times, we fall into the other, of not caring to be religious at any time? What can it profit

us, if, while studious to rid ourselves of all superstitious regard for consecrated places, we try to find nothing, go where we will in God's world, to kindle in our souls the feeling of true devotion? What can it profit us, that we are privileged with the ordinances of our religion, if, after having come to deem them possessed of no peculiar, mysterious efficacy, we neglect them altogether? What can it profit us, that we no longer look to the clergy as the only medium of divine grace, if, in consequence, we refuse the aid they are able to yield us? What can it profit us, to have rejected the gross error of relying on Christ's vicarious sufferings and substituted righteousness, if we will not use his religion as a means of destroying our sinfulness and quickening our progress in holiness? What can it profit us, if, in thinking less than others of place and circumstance in the world of spirits, we fall into the mistake, unreasonable as it is unscriptural, that no serious, enduring consequences of vice or virtue will accompany us beyond the grave?

Let these questions remind us where our dangers lie. Let them lead us to just views of the kingdom of God within. This kingdom,—is it not more than some of us are accustomed to consider it? Are there not those amongst us who cherish low and narrow views both of what the human soul is by nature, and of what it is capable of becoming by culture? The truth is, every man is born with that within him which he ought to respect, which he ought to speak well of, which he ought to prize more than all outward things; and every man who does his best to think, feel, and act, in harmony with his nature, in harmony with the creation around him, in harmony with the disciplinary events of

providence, in harmony with God's will, with Christ's example, and with the disclosures of eternity, is in the way of building up within himself and perfecting there a kingdom unspeakably more glorious and enduring than the universe of mere matter can boast. Now would any be told what it is, in the broad and high sense of our Saviour's words? Language can convey an adequate idea of it to none but such as already possess it. They only who are conscious of this kingdom within, who know by experience what God by his providence and grace, and Christ by his life, doctrine, and death, and themselves by faith, prayer, and assiduous labor, can do for the human soul—they only are aware of the full extent, grandeur, and beauty of that internal, spiritual empire of which I am speaking. Such perceive and feel what it is, and so need not that I should describe it. To others, I must content myself with suggesting a few imperfect hints like these.—

The kingdom of God within, let me say then, is that state or condition which belongs to the soul, when the faculties with which the Creator has gifted it, are in full exercise according to the laws originally prescribed to it; when its capacities are developed in natural order and proportion; when its powers are rightly balanced and in harmonious operation; when the entire man exists, thinks, feels, and acts, in accordance with nature, providence, and revelation. Or to express myself in other language, the kingdom of God within is the constant presence and complete operation of religion within the human breast, enlightening, warming, quickening, sanctifying, strengthening, and perfecting the whole inner man. True religion of course I mean, not the false

in any of its forms; not the sceptical religion of the sciolist; not the temporising religion of the worldling; not the lifeless religion of the formalist; not the feverish religion of the enthusiast; not the gloomy religion of the ascetic; not the lax religion of the latitudinarian; not the uncharitable religion of the bigot; not the dwarfed, confined religion of the exclusionist. No. But the religion of the Son of God, in its original simplicity, purity, and power; the religion of the genuine Gospel, intelligible, rational, cheerful, affectionate, winning, saving; the religion which, wherever it prevails, challenges the respect of sound heads, and the love of good hearts; the religion which manifests itself not in barren speculation, but in fruitful thought; not in transient excitement, but in permanent affection; not in periodical and local service alone, but in constant and universal obedience. The religion of the mind, curbing the roving fancy; arming conscience with a divine power; enlightening and strengthening the understanding; tasking reason to the utmost on all the subjects of liberal and useful inquiry; making progress, proficiency; acquisition, gain; knowledge, wisdom; wisdom, virtue; and virtue, happiness. The religion of the heart, awakening sensibility to the true and the good wherever found; purifying and refining the moral sentiments; nourishing and freshening the devout affections; exciting and directing the benevolent sympathies; giving a relish for all innocent pleasures and virtuous pursuits; kindling an unquenchable thirst for larger measures of spiritual excellence; and putting the whole soul in unison with whatever there is grand and beautiful and touching and stirring in the universe of matter and spirit. The re-

ligion of the life, throwing its bright illumination on all around, below, and above; presenting every object in its true relative proportions; imparting interest to small as well as great duties; revealing God to the soul in society, in business, in recreation, as well as in solitude, in the church, and in prayer; imparting vigor and efficiency to the active principles; prompting to industry, temperance, frugality, integrity, and usefulness; giving dignity and polish to the manners, and stability, strength, harmony, grace and beauty to the whole character; making its votaries familiar with every form of benevolence, whether it be to visit with relief and comfort the habitations of poverty, or to sit by the couch of sickness, or to smooth the pillow of declining age, or to carry consolation to captivity and penitence to guilt, or to enter the house of mourning and steal from affliction its cherished sorrow, or to calm the perturbed, heal the wounded, and bind up the broken spirit. The religion, in a word, that connects, always and everwhere, in indissoluble bonds, with faith, works; with theory, practice; with sensibility, action; with piety, morality; with spiritual things, things material; with aspirations after heaven, the pursuits of earth; with the interests of eternity, the interests of time; with everything, whether little or great, personal or social, present or future, a practical conviction of God's presence, agency, and paternal providence; of Christ's divine mission, character, teachings, and sacrifices; of the immortality of the human soul, and of a future state of righteous retribution.

Such, my hearers, is the kingdom of God within us, in so far as we are worthy of our religion. How beautiful, how glorious its characteristics. It is all we were

created to be; all that we should wish to become; all that can secure respect, love, joy, and hope here; all that fits for honor, glory and happiness hereafter. Yes, for it is not local and external, but inward and confined to no space. It is not perishable, like material things, but enduring as the spirit itself within us, so that we cannot lose it, so long as we are holy, to whatever place in God's universe we may be removed. It cometh not with observation, as the Jews expected, in the splendors of outward scenery, which in their nature must be transient; but secretly, silently, and for permanent enjoyment, in the lifting up of the thoughts, in the spreading out of the affections, and in the perfecting of the habits. It is not that of which we may for the moment say, "lo here! lo there!" and then find nothing in it any longer to interest us; but that of which we may affirm, it is everywhere and always, just in proportion as the heart and life are sanctified. It is not that of which we must wait till death to enjoy; but it is a good of which we may begin to taste, the moment the love of God, of man, and of duty, finds a place within us; for the kingdom of heaven commences on earth when moral excellence commences, and it is perfected in the life after death, wherever God may choose that we shall continue in existence.

My hearers, I have been speaking to you on a subject of great moment. I know I have not done it justice, nor could I in a single discourse. All indeed that I proposed to myself was to throw out some hints for your own reflections. I wished to exalt your views and my own of the nature of that kingdom which Jesus gave up his life to establish. We have seen that the most strange

and hurtful errors have prevailed respecting it,—errors that, in proportion as they have operated upon the minds of men, have turned religion into superstition; making it slavish, groveling, earthly; robbing God of his loveliest attributes; paralizing human efforts to do well; and converting this beautiful earth into a vale of tears. We have had some glimpses of a different aspect of God's kingdom. We have seen that it does not come with observable show; is not external to us, as the scenery of nature is external; but that it is, so far as it exists at all for our advantage, within us; within the soul; spiritual; not subject to place or circumstance; not changing with the outward creation; but independent of all beings and of all things except God and the soul; everywhere and at all times possessed of the same nature; perpetually growing in strength and beauty, constituting heaven now, and affording an earnest of a better heaven hereafter.

And is there not something delightful in this? something to excite, encourage, ennoble us? something that falls in with our most cherished thoughts, our best sentiments, our holiest desires, our brightest hopes? Let us go forth, then, my brethren, with these impressions. Let us feel the importance of having the kingdom of God established within us. Let us regard external religion only as the means of the internal. Let it be our highest aim to purify, enlighten, and elevate the soul. Let us dread nothing so much as sin. Let us deem nothing of so much value as holiness. Let us learn to hate vice more for its intrinsic ugliness than for the punishment that follows it; and to love virtue rather for her own loveliness than for the dowry she brings with

her. Let us accustom our thoughts to look upon this life and the next as essentially one continuous state of existence; and upon death only as a sort of dark passage-way from the one to the other, through which the soul is but a moment, as it were, in going, carrying with it all its fixed habits of thought and feeling; all its established tastes, preferences, and capacities; all, in a word, of heaven it commenced here, and all of hell it allowed to be kindled up within itself while in the body.

These, my hearers, and such as these, are the views I have been led to entertain of God's kingdom within the christian soul. No others, it seems to me, accord so well with our nature, our religion, and the discipline of divine providence. No others, I think, are so suited to beget elevated thoughts, generous affections, and holiness of life. Go forth then, I beseech you, with these impressions; and may all the virtues and graces of the Gospel,—purity, shrinking as by instinct from whatever can stain it; meekness, calm and unruffled amid all the irritating scenes of life; humility, ever careful to claim too little rather than too much; sympathy, prompt to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them weep; patience, submitting without a murmur to the will of the Supreme; fortitude, bearing up manfully under every calamity; temperance, spurning away all temptations to excess; courage, overcoming every moral foe; perseverance, pushing its way through every difficulty; devotion, maintaining holy converse with the omnipresent One; gratitude, daily and hourly tracing the record of divine bounties; resignation, looking from the grave even of nearest kindred and friends, with heaven-ward,

though tearful eye; integrity, moving along the narrow path of right, with firm, undeviating step; faith, quick to discern in the future whatever surpasses present possessions; hope, clothing the far-off heights with all that is attractive and animating; and last, though not least, charity, with warm heart and open hand,—may all these virtues, and more than these, have their appropriate places in that spiritual kingdom, which God, of his infinite mercy grant, may be established, built up, and perfected in your own souls, and in the souls of your children. Amen.

SERMON VI.*

BY REV. JAMES WALKER, CHARLESTOWN.

ON CRAFT AND MANAGEMENT IN RELIGION.

2 CORINTHIANS, XII. 16. BUT BE IT SO, I DID NOT BURDEN YOU: NEVERTHELESS, BEING CRAFTY, I CAUGHT YOU WITH GUILE.

THIS is understood to be one of those sudden turns, not unfrequent in Paul's epistles, in which, without giving the reader any notice of it, he introduces an objection, and sometimes in the very words of the objector. On recurring to the passage, and considering it in the connexion in which it stands, it will be found that the Apostle is here vindicating himself against aspersions cast upon his character and pretensions, by certain disorderly and factious members of the Corinthian church. He insists that he had shown himself inferior to the other apostles in nothing, except in not making himself burdensome by exacting a maintenance, as was their practice in like cases. 'Forgive me,' says he, ironically, 'this wrong.' Here, however, he supposes one of the factious and disorderly members to come in with an objection. 'Be it so,' perhaps he will say, 'I did not burden you' by exacting a maintenance, like

* Preached May 22, 1833, at the ordination of Rev. Josiah K. Waite, Fitzwilliam, N. H.

the other apostles : 'nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile,' gaining more money in the shape of presents, through partizans and emissaries, than my maintenance would have cost. Observe, therefore, that Paul does not mean to say of himself, nor to admit in any form or in any sense, that he had been crafty, or that he had caught the converts he had made by guile. On the contrary, he introduces the charge as a foul aspersion cast on him in his absence by a faction in the Corinthian church, which he mentions but to repel.

The text thus explained introduces a subject not inappropriate to the occasion, — the danger and sin of resorting to craft and management for religious purposes. The Christian minister should be prudent, active, and wise; but it is not necessary, nor expedient, nor allowable, that he should be crafty, or think to catch men with guile, even though his object be the salvation of their souls.

Let me begin by explaining what I mean by resorting to craft and management for religious purposes. It consists in attempting to act on men's feelings and passions through their ignorance and prejudices on religious subjects. We may presume that the ministers of all religions, true or false, aim, at least professedly, to excite, stimulate and direct the religious principle in individuals and in whole communities. Now there are two ways in which this may be done, and is done. One way is, to unfold to them the truth; to enlighten their minds; to enable them to perceive for themselves, and to feel for themselves, their religious relations as they really exist, and the motives and duties which grow out of these relations. Another way is, to take their igno-

rance and prejudices on religious subjects, just as we find them, and, instead of endeavoring to remove or correct them, to make use of them as a means of moral and religious excitement and impression. The last method, knowingly employed, supposes craft and management, but not always a bad purpose or disposition; as it may originate, and sometimes probably does, in an honest belief, that the best way of making men good and happy, is to cheat them into it.

Having explained what I mean by resorting to craft and management for religious purposes, I hardly need observe that those persons err egregiously, who proceed as if this abuse began in Christianity, or even in the corruptions of Christianity. It is matter of history, that there was more priestcraft, and more pious frauds practised in a single heathen temple at Memphis, or Athens, or Rome, than in any twenty Christian churches, even during the darkest ages of Catholic imposition. Not that I suppose paganism to have *originated* in priestcraft or in pious frauds. It originated, there is no reason to doubt, in good faith; in the countless indications of an invisible power, and in a deep want of the human soul; and as long as all were alike ignorant, all were alike sincere. Afterwards, as the priests, and magistrates, and privileged classes became better informed, they saw, they could not but see, that many of the forms of the popular faith and worship were founded in error and superstition. They did not, however, upon this, think it necessary or expedient immediately to reject these forms, but chose rather to retain them, and make use of them, as a means of preserving and securing their influence over the multitude.

Here began the use of craft and management for religious purposes; and not in Christianity, nor even in the corruptions of Christianity. 'If, indeed,' says Polybius, a pagan writer, who flourished a little more than a century before Christ, 'one were to frame a civil polity only for wise men, it is possible superstition might not be necessary. But since the multitude is ever fickle and capricious, full of exorbitant passions, and irrational and violent resentments, there is no way left to keep them in order, but by its terrors and pompous circumstances.' Strabo, also, another pagan, who wrote sometime afterwards, says: 'For it is impossible to govern women and the common people, and to keep them pious, holy and virtuous, by the precepts of philosophy. This can only be done by superstition, which is raised and supported by ancient fictions and modern prodigies.' Nay, so far is the gospel itself from being implicated in this matter, that Dr. Middleton, himself an implacable foe to every thing like cunning and management in religion, has clearly demonstrated, in his celebrated Letter from Rome, that almost every considerable imposture which has been resorted to in the Christian church, may be traced back to the same, or a like imposture among the pagan priests from whom it was borrowed.

It follows, that if Christianity has not, as yet, succeeded in eradicating entirely a disposition to resort to cunning and management for religious purposes, all that can fairly be inferred from it is simply this: — that Christianity has not, as yet, in this respect any more than in any other respect, fully and perfectly accomplished the purpose for which it was given. Be it

known, however, and be it remembered, that so far as Christianity has had any effect in regard to priestcraft and pious frauds, it has operated materially to lessen the motives to resort to them, and the opportunities and apologies for practising them.

For look, in this connexion, at Christianity itself, and its Founder, and its first missionaries. Nothing is more remarkable in the character and proceedings of our Lord, and the apostles, than their entire rejection of every thing like artificial arrangements for producing an effect. They appealed, indeed to the affections, but it was always through the understanding; they strove to awaken the conscience, but it was simply by a clear and powerful exhibition of moral truth. Take, for example, the sermon on the Mount, or Paul's discourses as recorded in the Acts; — what can be more calm, rational or practical. They are models of dispassionate and unanswerable *reasoning* on righteousness, temperance and judgment to come. I am free to say, without fear of contradiction, that the world contains no compositions further removed, both in letter and spirit, from an attempt to act on the feelings and passions of the multitude through their ignorance and prejudices on religious subjects. Nay, have we forgotten, that the whole life of our Saviour and his immediate disciples, was spent in resisting and exposing priestcraft and pious frauds? Have we forgotten that the deepest and most solemn denunciations of the New Testament are levelled against the arts, and machinery, and proselyting spirit of an ambitious and profligate hierarchy? Have we forgotten the woe upon woe thundering through a whole chapter against those who were scrupulous about

tythes, even to the tything of the worthless weeds in their gardens, and yet neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, — who devoured widow's houses, and, for a pretence, made long prayers?

In speaking, therefore, of the craft and management resorted to by Christians, for religious purposes, let it be distinctly understood that we speak not of Christianity itself, but of its corruptions; — corruptions, too, for which Christianity itself is in no sense, and in no degree responsible. The fact, I know, cannot be denied, and I am willing to add, cannot be excused or palliated, that Christians of all denominations have occasionally sought to act on the feelings and passions of the multitude, and especially on their fears, through their ignorance and prejudices on religious subjects. Be it observed, however, that in doing so, they have deviated essentially and totally from the genius of their religion, and from the example of its Author, and its first expounders.

Let us consider, for a moment, the developments of the vice in question among the Catholics. At first they were content with forging books, letters and public documents; then followed a series of pretended apparitions, prophecies and miracles; and then the superstitions connected with relics, pilgrimages, and the worship of saints. Meanwhile the clergy were every day accumulating power and influence, not merely, as is sometimes supposed, by the accession of the civil authorities, but also, and still more, by a dextrous management of the ignorance, the prejudices and the superstitions of the multitude. They early contrived to invest excommunication, and the other ecclesiastical

censures, with imaginary terrors, and induced the people generally to ascribe a mysterious and magical virtue to the sacraments as by them administered, and especially to *their* prayers and intercessions. They also claimed infallibility in the interpretation of the Scriptures, and authority to grant indulgences and pronounce absolution; and succeeded, at length, in carrying their usurpations to such an extent as to make the civil government but little more than the tool of their ambition, or, worse still, the pander of their appetites and pleasures. We err egregiously, if we suppose that the abuses, as we esteem them, of the Catholic Church were the work of one man, or of one day, or of one age. They consisted of a gradual accumulation of abuses, beginning back as far as the second century; to which every age from that time, and almost every leading individual contributed, until the revival of letters and the Protestant reformation.

All this is matter of history; but let not the enemies of the gospel exult, or its friends be troubled. It is no more an objection to revealed religion, that it has been perverted, and corrupted by man, than it is an objection to natural religion, that that also has been perverted and corrupted by man. Besides, if Christianity had never been given to the world, instead of having had the priestcraft and pious frauds of the dark ages in the christian church, we should have had them in the heathen temple; with this difference only, that they would have been immeasurably more gross and debasing. Instead of having had the relics, and the pilgrimages, and the exorcisms, and other Catholic impositions of the same stamp, we should have had the

bloody rites, the drunken orgies, the nameless and disgusting impurities and obscenities which, even in the best days of Greece and Rome, entered into, and constituted an essential part of the worship of the pagan gods. With this difference *only*, did I say? There was another and still more important difference. Christianity, unlike paganism, overlaid as it was by this mass of error and corruption, contained within itself a redeeming principle, — a gem of truth and life which the error and the corruption could not kill. It is Christianity that has purified and reformed Christianity; — a fact which deserves to be regarded more than it is, by those who are so ready to say, that Christians have corrupted the gospel, and yet forget how much has been done by Christians to detect and expose these corruptions, and restore the gospel to its primitive truth, order, and simplicity.

I have spoken of the priestcraft and pious frauds, which prevailed prior to the Protestant reformation; but did that event, glorious and happy as it undoubtedly was, for the civil and religious liberties of mankind, put an end to such abuses? Were not the reformers themselves, and have not their followers and disciples been guilty, at times, of endeavoring to act on the feelings and passions of the multitude, and especially on their fears, through their ignorance and prejudices on religious subjects? Do not Christians at the present day resort in some cases, knowingly, to artificial expedients for producing an effect, instead of relying on the regenerating and sanctifying power of the truth, clearly and earnestly set forth?

Look, for example, at the 'new measures,' as they are called, which were so much in favor, about a year ago, in many parts of the country. The art of producing what is termed 'a revival,' was studied as a kind of politics; the preliminary steps were set down in books; and persons found to be remarkably skilful in these things were sent for from place to place. First came a series of 'inquiry' and 'anxious' meetings, held, for the most part, in the night, and in crowded and dimly lighted apartments, where the topics and tones of the speakers, and all the circumstances, conspired to excite and fan the kindling flame. Then followed, as soon as the people were prepared for it, 'the protracted meeting,' with its complicated apparatus for acting on the feelings and passions, kept up without intermission day after day, until the ordinary power of resistance in the human mind was entirely broken down, and men and women became as passive as infants in the hands of their spiritual guides. I do not now allude to these occurrances with a view to go into any formal statements illustrative of their bad and dangerous tendency: especially as it appears from recent publications, that many, who favored or connived at them at first, are beginning to open their eyes of their own accord, and to see them in the same light in which we do. Neither would I be understood to impeach the leading motive or purpose of those who have resorted to these measures, being willing to take it for granted that this has always been a desire to awaken the community to a deeper sense of religion. Undoubtedly, as in all similar general and public movements, the chief actors have been

influenced more or less by selfish and sectarian considerations; still let us take it for granted, that they have aimed ultimately to awaken the community to a deeper sense of religion. It is certain, nevertheless, that they have aimed to do it, not by a simple, earnest and powerful exposition of moral truth, but by an artificial arrangement of circumstances for producing an effect. Craft, perhaps, is too harsh a word to use in this connexion; but, to say the least, they have resorted to management for religious purposes.

Some, I know, may think to vindicate this course on the ground, that mankind must be led, and if they are led right, it matters not by what means; neither of which positions, as it seems to me, can be sustained.

In the first place, as a Protestant and Congregationalist, I am not prepared to admit the old argument for popery and despotism, that mankind are incapable of thinking for themselves, and must be led; — that they will not reason and reflect, and, therefore, must be managed. This may have been sound doctrine once; for so long as the many were willing to be managed and led by the few, it was, perhaps, good evidence that they deserved to be, and needed to be. At any time, however, when a man pins his faith on the sleeve of another, he has to rely on a judgment as fallible as his own; with this difference, that whereas another may have an interest in deceiving him, he can have no interest in deceiving himself. Besides, what say the Scriptures? 'Call no man, master:' 'Prove all things:' 'Try the spirits:' 'I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say:' 'And why even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right.' There is one way, indeed, in

which Christians and Protestants are willing to be led, and expect to be led by their spiritual guides: namely, by the force of evidence, by the power of conviction, by the light of truth. Let them see in the calm, sober and deliberate exercise of their understanding, that you are right, and they will follow you, not because you lead, but because the truth leads. But try to convert them by any other means — try to convert them by address, and management, and artificial expedients, and though such measures will be likely to succeed with a part for a time, their only effect on the rest, and their ultimate effect on the whole, will be to awaken suspicions affecting the credit of religion in general. People will begin to suspect, thousands have begun to suspect, that all religion originates and consists in the illusions, by which they see it to be promoted and upheld.

Moreover, I cannot agree with those who reason on the presumption, that provided the community are thoroughly awakened to a sense of religion, it matters not by what means. Who has yet to learn that the character, depth and permanence of our religious impressions depend essentially on the nature of the agency and influences by which they are produced? Jesus Christ has said, 'Sanctify them by thy TRUTH.' He is distinguished from all pretenders to a divine commission by this circumstance, that the only means by which he aimed to excite the moral and religious principle in man, was by imparting moral and religious truth. When his ministers undertake to do it in any other way, they reduce the gospel to a level with the multitude of superstitions, by which the human mind

has been degraded and enslaved. This has too often been done. The three great corruptions of Christianity have been these: — substituting for the power of divine truth, first, coercion; then, credulity; and at last, machinery. By these means, it is not doubted, that much may be done to excite even to excess the moral and religious principle in man, and the character formed may bear some resemblance to the christian character; but it is not the christian character. The christian character, properly so called, must originate in the sanctifying power of truth, of moral and spiritual truth;—in a calm, deep and living sense and perception of the laws and conditions of our moral and spiritual being, and of the relations which bind us to God and eternity. Religious excitement, or rather excitement about religion, is not religion even while it lasts and when it is induced by artificial expedients, and depends on illusion and feeling, instead of knowledge and principle, the excitement itself must be superficial and evanescent.

'Sanctify them by thy truth.' We are false to this prayer — we are misled by a narrow and mistaken view of the subject, if we suppose that a clear, vivid and full perception of divine truth is not sufficient to sanctify men wholly. If it should be said, that what men want is not more knowledge, but a better disposition, — the answer is, that more knowledge, a knowledge of the laws of their moral and spiritual being, a knowledge of the indispensable conditions of inward peace and happiness, will give them a better disposition. A man may know a multitude of truths, I allow, without either manifesting or feeling a disposition to obey the truth: but it is be-

cause there is a deeper truth yet, which he does not know. Let the light of that truth beam on his soul, and it will reveal relations and tendencies, which he never considered or knew before, and which knowing he cannot but consider; yes, I repeat it — which knowing he cannot but consider. The truths of mathematics, the truths of natural philosophy, the truths of history and political economy have nothing to do with the obligation of truth itself — have nothing to do with moral truth. Let his mind be filled and illuminated with moral truth, with a clear and vivid perception of the laws of his moral and spiritual being, and of the indispensable conditions of inward peace and happiness, and it is not in human nature that he should be disobedient to the heavenly vision.

None of us feel, none of us acknowledge, none of us even so much as imagine, in all its extent, the amazing power of divine truth. So far as we know the laws of our physical being, we never think, except in moments of temporary alienation of mind, to disregard them. Would you not look upon it as the act of a maniac to take up burning coals in his hands; to scrape up the dust and gravel of the streets, and devour it as food; or to dash himself headlong from a precipice? For the same reason it would be the act, not of a wicked or thoughtless man, but of a maniac, to persist day after day, and month after month, and year after year, in the indulgence of passions, which he knows, which he feels, which he sees to be eating into his soul like fire. Knowledge, light, a clear perception of moral and spiritual truth is wanted, and nothing else, to awaken men from their dream of worldliness and sin. This knowledge, this light, this moral and spiritual truth the Son

of God came to dispense; not in such a manner as to make it accessible to here and there a gifted mind, and to such minds only, but accessible to all, to the weakest and lowliest, who seek it in a right spirit. 'To this end was I born,' said Christ, 'and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.'

I have now spoken, as much at length as my limits will allow, on the danger and sin of resorting to craft and management for religious purposes. I have traced it to its origin in paganism, and followed down its history in the Christian church, and pointed out its total incompatibility with the example and instructions of the Lord Jesus and his apostles, with the genius of our religion, and the nature of true holiness. Let me, then, repeat in substance the observation with which I began: — a serious and devoted minister of Jesus Christ will be wise to win souls, but not crafty. He will not think it necessary, or expedient, or allowable to avail himself of artificial and politic contrivances for acting on the feelings and the imagination. He will appeal, indeed, to the affections and the conscience, and endeavor to move them as he best can; but it will always be through the understanding, and by no other means than by a simple, earnest and affecting exposition of divine truth. Others may hope to supply the defect of sound learning and real ability, or to feed an unscrupulous hankering for influence and notoriety, by outward appliances, ingenious expedients and a complicated machinery; but it is to be presumed that an enlightened and liberal community will make the necessary distinction, and not permit the means of grace sanctioned by the

gospel to be supplanted, or made of none effect, by the commandments or the inventions of men.

At the same time, you will observe that it is no part of my object in this discourse to countenance and swell the vulgar clamor against priestcraft, often vaguely conceived, and raised and directed without evidence or discrimination. At this moment a controversy is going on in many places between the demagogue and the priest; — craft against craft. Priestcraft may be, and sometimes is, met and opposed on its own ground, by acting on the feelings and passions of the multitude through their ignorance and prejudices, and solely with a view to bring discredit on revelation and religion generally. Whoever is acquainted with the history of the rise and progress of the French revolution must know, that deism, and even that atheism may have its fanaticism, as well as Christianity, and its priests, and its priestcraft. There never was more of the spirit, or of the tricks of priestcraft and proselytism among the monks of the dark ages, than among the French illuminati, and the Jacobins of Paris. It was the priestcraft of infidelity and atheism; of which the people were in the first instance the willing dupes, and afterwards the helpless victims.

How then, let me ask in conclusion, can the community be protected against this sort of imposition? Not, as some have imagined, simply by a separation of church and state. The usurpation and tyranny of the Catholic priesthood did not originate in, nor depend upon their alliance with the civil authorities, but grew out of power they had previously gained over the imaginations, the prejudices and the fears of the people. Neither is

it a security against the abuse in question, that you have confidence in your spiritual guides as being really anxious for the spread of what they consider the truth, and for the prevalence of seriousness and piety. I have charity to believe that a large proportion of the craft and management resorted to for religious purposes by Christians of all denominations, has been resorted to in a sincere conviction that it was necessary to the good order of society, and man's well-being and final salvation. Our only hope is in education, the education of the people, the intellectual and moral education of the whole people. The whole community must become so enlightened and so conscientious, as to be able and willing to think and judge for themselves — neither admitting anything, nor rejecting anything, until they have examined it seriously and thoroughly, and found it to approve itself, or not to approve itself to reason and conscience and the word of God. Then we may expect that Christians will drink of the waters of life freely, not as they come mixed and turbid through the traditions and prejudices of men, but limpid and pure as they gush from the fountain itself. Then, too, shall we be able to say, and with a force and meaning which the words never had before, 'Now, therefore, arise O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness.'

SERMON VII.

BY REV. MELLISH IRVING MOTTE, BOSTON.

GOD'S PROMISE OF IMMORTALITY.

1 JOHN II. 25: 'AND THIS IS THE PROMISE THAT HE HATH PROMISED US, EVEN ETERNAL LIFE.'

IN God's word, the 'Book of Promises,' he hath promised man immortality. The Gospel makes a future life certain. Christ hath spoken, and spoken that which he did know.

> 'From heaven he came, of heaven he spoke,
> To heaven he led his followers' way;
> Dark clouds of gloomy night he broke,
> Unveiling an immortal day.'

But though the voice of revelation is the loudest and clearest, the promise has been whispered also in other tones. There are corroborative arguments suggested by natural reason which should not be overlooked. They are an original, universal revelation; and have made this an article of belief among all nations, the

most civilized and the most savage. Even some who have pretended to doubt the existence of a Deity, have yet insisted that their immortality was no less sure: for, if they could exist here by chance, their spirits could just as easily continue to exist by chance.

I can only hint at two or three of the arguments. Be it remembered, they are of the nature of promises from the inspirer of our moral and mental constitution. If through this he gives us reason to expect life after death, his veracity, his justice is pledged to keep his word.

I. The strong instinctive hope for immortality, which springs up in all human breasts as the sparks fly upward, is a presumption for it. Why this deep thirst in our souls for life? An anxiety that grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength, for the assurance that we are not to perish? Why should we be made to trouble ourselves about the eternal future any more than the cattle of the field? If this anxious hope has been implanted in us without any corresponding provision having been made for its gratification, they have the advantage of us. For they have no care, no curiosity, no apprehension on the subject of death and futurity; while man, the nobler and more improved a being he becomes, is more and more urged by something within, to stake his all on the hope of immortality. Would a benignant creator mock him thus? Would he make such sport of his highest feelings, giving him a troubled, restless existence — never satisfied with the present, always aspiring to better things to come — only to derive from his vain struggles and disappointed hopes a kind of diabolic amusement; like

that of some beast of prey torturing to death the victim in his claws, suffering it to crawl off a little way and suppose itself escaping one moment, only to pounce upon it more surely, and baffle its attempted flight the next? Would you, my friends, you, imperfect sinful mortals, as we all are, would you treat your children so? Would you thus virtually promise them immortality, and then break your word, with aggravated cruelties?

II. Again, the necessity of this belief to the order and safety of communities, as well as to the happiness of individuals, is an argument for its probable truth. You see plainly that prisons and gallowses are not enough to deter from crime. There is nothing in *this* world that will move some men to virtue. With seared consciences and hardened hearts, they cannot conceive that they have any reason in this world to deny themselves any advantages promised by the cruellest murder, if they think they shall escape detection. The natural humanity of feeling, which, you may say, would prevent most persons is easily worn off. In a little while any one of us might learn to find pleasure in the sight of human suffering. Think of many popular *amusements*. The cock-pit and the race-course furnish the most exciting pleasure in proportion to their sanguinary atrocities. Nay, witness the gladiators of ancient Rome, and the bull-fights of modern Spain, where the most tender-hearted applaud with ecstacy, the delicate sentimental female as rapturously as the old hireling of many wars. It is all habit. A dead body to one accustomed to handling corpses, is no more than a piece of flesh; and blood, to fingers that have

dabbled in it, inspires horror as little as red ink. Where are the scruples and shudderings of anatomists? And talk of a moral sense to the brutified, who rank themselves with the cattle of the field, and to-morrow expect to lie down in the same ditch with them to die forever! It is a future retribution we want. The world cannot do without it. The constitution of man and of society is imperfect if they do not involve this essential element. The Creator must seem to us to have made a mistake if he has left out this. His work without it is a clumsy and unfinished job, as we should say in human art. It must go wrong. It cannot be expected to work well. I need not ask if you think the Allwise could have overlooked this defect.

This argument is presumptive proof for the reality of a future state; and what is more, it is a presumption in favor of our Maker's having furnished us with the means of *ascertaining* it; and therefore, if the conclusions of natural reason are insufficient for the purpose, it is a presumption in favor of the truth of revelation, which declares it explicitly. It gives antecedent probability to Christianity. A revelation was needed to make God's work perfect and harmonious, and therefore God would give it.

III. Another argument is derived from the unequal administration of justice in this life. A good man is doubtless happier for being good, and a bad man more miserable for being bad; but they are far from being happy or miserable exactly in proportion to their characters. For there are the sources of enjoyment and suffering besides the character. Not to speak of the external goods of fortune, there is in the mind itself great diversity as regards a constitutional faculty of enjoyment.

Some hardly require anything to make them happy. Others possess every thing in vain. A cloud is on their spirits, and no sun can pierce its gloom. Noonday is midnight to their minds. Anxiety, terror, melancholy, insanity is their marked doom; and yet they may be good men too. Give them every good the world contains, and give them the noblest virtues, yet that drop of black bile that is on the brain invalidates it all for this world. He is born blind to a thousand lights that beam into other hearts. 'Who did sin, this man or his parents that he was born blind.' It might have been his parents. Certainly he did not make his own vitiated temperament. But it may be, that 'neither hath this man sinned nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him;' the great work of retribution, compensation, impartial justice hereafter. For, meanwhile, the strong nerved villain may do his deeds of guilt and enjoy their fruits, high in health, jocund in spirits, careless of the future, if there be no eternal future, 'and entering not into misfortune like other men.' Now shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Can he be so partial in dispensations which are to be final? If there be a God at all, and no one, say what he will, ever disbelieved it twenty-four hours, he must be a good God. The proofs of his existence are proofs of his perfect goodness. Now justice and benevolence both require that he should sometime or other rectify the irregularities and reconcile the seeming contradictions of our present moral condition. As a place of probation or discipline, this world and man's nature are just what we should expect them to be; but the retributions which take place here really do not

seem exact enough to be consistent with infinite righteousness and mercy. The end is not yet. There must be something more.

IV. This is the lesson man's moral nature teaches. His intellectual capacities afford another presumptive proof. Are they not more than would suffice for a brief sojourn of three score years and ten in a world where the most important business we had to do was to eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. Could we not get along with inferior faculties if the present objects of sense were all we should ever have to exercise them on? The ordinary avocations of life do not require much intellect, and you do not find that they who are most abundantly endowed with it succeed best, by any means, in obtaining food and raiment, fire and water. To till the ground, the first and only indispensable labor, to practise the manual arts, to sell, to buy, are occupations which we can conceive followed by beings incapable of soaring like man to the heights of philosophy and religion. Instinct would have done for us.

Instinct in fact would have saved us much pain; how much mental suffering! how many errors! how much anxiety and apprehension! Brutes commit no mistakes in their vocation. Brutes anticipate no evil. Brutes know nothing of the King of Terrors. They are saved all that horror of death which is in the imagination, and that is much the greatest part. Man alone, the only rational animal, is often all his lifetime subject to bondage for dread of death. And yet man is the only animal at the same time susceptible of such extreme anguish as drives him headlong and voluntarily upon this dreaded evil. Man is the only suicidal animal.

None of the creatures of bare instinct, taste the bitterness of this insanity.

If man then had no higher destination than the beasts that perish, I do not know why he should be made to think of the invisible, the spiritual, the infinite, the eternal, seeing his dealings were to be only with the visible, the material, the finite, the temporal. Why was he made capable of abstracting his mind from present objects, enjoyments and pains, living as it were out of the body, carrying his views and hopes to the remotest futurity, and raising himself to intense interest in things not merely in another country, but in another world and another state of being entirely different from this?

If you found at the wharf a large vessel furnished with every thing necessary for a voyage to cross the Atlantic, or to India, would you believe one who should tell you it was fitted out only to go to the fort in the harbor? But the human soul is fitted out infinitely more richly than the costliest Indiaman. It does seem intended for a longer voyage than from the cradle to the coffin. Think of Newton, Milton, Bacon, and souls like theirs; their diverse faculties, and the vast variety and rapidity of their operations; the infinitude of ideas stored up in them; remembered for years, and drawn out for use at a moment's notice; and used in such and endless multitude of ways, compared, arranged, combined, diversified without limit. 'From a few simple axioms they extracted the most sublime and astonishing truths, solving the mysteries of nature almost to the bounds of the universe.' Think of them, moreover, turning their eyes inward upon themselves, and sounding the fathomless depths there; bringing them-

selves to bear with patience the acutest pains for the sake of what they found there; restraining their strongest passions; renouncing, for the sake of duty all that this world has to give. Is it credible, is it possible that these mighty souls have shared the fate of the vilest reptile that the eye does not see nor the foot feel as it passes over it? Can it be, that after having lit upon the universe to our eyes, as it were, by their mental light, they themselves have sunk into everlasting darkness and insensibility?

V. A distinct probability from the last mentioned is derived from the infinitely *progressive* capacities of the human soul. We know not the limit of its possible improvement. It goes on, or may go on, growing in virtue and in knowledge till the moment death palsies the bodily instruments by which it exhibits its virtue and knowledge to others. How different this from the nature of the inferior animals. I am not at all concerned to deny their possible immortality too. Some reasoners question man's, because, if the brutes are to die why should not he? But what if God saw fit to give them a future existence as well as ourselves? Still this reasoning from them to us will not hold. For not to speak of any other differences, none of the arguments I have touched upon apply to them, and the one I now present supposes in fact a disparity almost like that between the finite and infinite.

They make no improvement, no progress. What they know in their youth, they know in their old age, and nothing more. And what one generation knows, succeeding generations know, and nothing more, to the end of the world. The bird builds its nest, the bee its comb, the beaver its dam as well, the first time as they

do ever after. The horse, the dog, the elephant, the most sagacious animals come, in a little while, to the full maturity of their powers, and then stop; and what they are now they were probably when Adam first named them. But the mind of man was not thus full blown at once. It seems designed for growth, and it does grow, and conceives and aspires to interminable growth. The more it has learned, the more it has thirsted to learn. The more it has accomplished, the more it longs to achieve. The wider it has enlarged its powers by use, the further and broader stretch out its views and projects before it.

Death finds it far from the end of the progress for which it has capacities and talents, and desires. Now has God given capacities which were never to be filled, talents never to be exerted, desires which were only to be abortive? When its prospect is still enlarging, its acquisitions only begun, apparently, its advancement most promising, shall that ever brightening intelligence be suddenly struck out of being, and its light quenched forever without a purpose? The business of education for which we were put into this infant school of our being, certainly seems unfinished when we leave it. Must there not be higher schools; — where we may attain all knowledge, and subdue every relic of passion, and sublimate every faculty to its height, and realize that perfect standard of goodness which we now only imagine in dreamy musings, aiming at it, it may be, but never reaching it?

If we found a watch with twelve hours on the face, we should conclude, although it had run down at the second or third hour, it was designed to go longer.

Only wind it up again, and it will complete the period for which there is a provision contrived in its works. The human mind is this watch.

VI. But besides the infinite capacity of improvement, conscience urges upon us an unceasing *obligation* to improve. Conscience is satisfied with nothing less than the renunciation of all evil and the attainment of all moral good, all righteousness, all holiness, all love, perfection, God. But this great aim is never reached on earth. We may approach its lofty heights nearer and nearer, but we never come up to them; we never can lay our hand upon them. It is like the child chasing the rainbow. Neither can we quite conceive that after hundreds of years and thousands of years we shall be able to assert, 'I have embraced all moral truth; mine is the sublimest virtue; nothing good can be added to my character.' Certainly there is not time before we die to do all the work the holy law within us demands. He who labors at it most conscientiously, feels most deeply that he has not done all. Every step he mounts in goodness, he conceives worthier ideas of perfection, and sees a loftier model of imitation. And therefore the law of conscience continually repeats its commands, insisting upon obedience the more sternly, in proportion as we have been careful and anxious to regard them. The moment you cease to strive for continued perfection, says reason, you abandon your whole dignity as a reasonable being and a free agent. What remains, then, if the claims of conscience cannot be satisfied in this life, but that probably our Maker, the maker of our conscience, has given us an existence stretching over and beyond this life. If the work is

infinite, the eternal Father will not stint us in time; he will give us an infinite life to do it in. Has he said, 'Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect?' he has also said, 'ye have here no abiding habitation; your conversation is in heaven.'

Fear not, my brethren. Only follow that inward law which exacts of us perpetual improvement. Persevere in it to the end with the help of God, and you will feel that he will not refuse a continuance of this help. He will not block up your path at the beginning of your journey. The faculties you have so happily begun to exercise, and would so gladly bring to perfection, he will not cast into eternal disuse. The struggles which have cost you so much, shall not have been in vain. Now that they begin to be easier and pleasanter, surely they shall not be broken off forever. No, Eternal Wisdom will not annihilate you. Your infinite capacity for improvement, your infinite obligation to improvement, your infinite longing for improvement, cry out that he will not. He has given you too much for him not to give you more. Ye were not made to die eternally. *Dust* unto dust. Decay seize what decay can conquer. The stream of time overwhelm what finds its end and object in time. The end and object of your existence are not in time. Your calling is an everlasting one. Ye have a work to do for which ye must live forever. A destination to duty, to perfection, God's service, is a destination to endless progress, to immortality. A crown of eternal life is the natural reward of a moral being striving to be faithful to his destiny.

I have now suggested six of the simplest natural presumptions for a life after death. They will be received, of course, only as specimens of the numerous arguments that might be adduced. The metaphysical proof from the nature of the soul, I might leave untouched. Be the soul material or immaterial, it has no effect upon what I have said. Though I suppose few of us can believe that there is not a living and thinking principle in us distinct from our flesh and bones; — that there is not something spiritual superinduced to organization; — that a paving-stone from the streets could by any mere arrangement of its parts reason loftily, imagine splendidly, and love ardently. And if there be this living principle in us superior to the bodily powers which it uses as its instruments, why should the suspension of that use imply the extinction of the living spirit? In a dream, some of these instruments are dispensed with. The soul acts independently of them. Look at the sleep-walker. His eyes are shut, or if open, 'there is no speculation in them;' he sees not with them; yet he finds his way with ease along intricate and dangerous passages, where he might be confounded with the use of all his senses. Or look at one in a swoon or trance. He is dead, to all appearance. His bodily faculties all seem suspended. Yet there is a living spirit in him. The spirit then can do without its corporeal integuments. Let them die, rot, and be scattered to the winds, the spirit is not annihilated. For indeed the body itself is not annihilated. Its parts are only separated by decay: that is all. Not an atom perishes. Not a particle is put out of existence. Since the world began, not the smallest speck

of the perfumed dust upon the humblest flowret of the desert has ceased to be, any farther than that its parts have been separated. But the spirit, mind, consciousness, has no parts to be separated. It is one and indivisible, and so cannot be dissolved by death. Who can think of a half consciousness? Who can conceive of the quarter of a thought?

But if it be true that we are to live forever, would not such an unspeakably glorious truth have been made as self-evident to every mind as if it were written in letters of fire across the firmament? Why has not the benevolent parent of all done this?

In our present twilight we know but little of his purposes. We have not been his counsellors in this, nor in any of the seeming imperfections or evils of life. Yet we can appreciate two of his reasons for giving occasion to this objection.

1. That we might exercise our faculties in attaining to this precious truth through his appointed means, the study of nature, reason and revelation. Labor is the kindly ordained lot of man. We secure nothing valuable without it, or if secured, we enjoy it not. We should undeniably be less happy without the necessity of labor. And as every other important possession is made dependant on it, so this, the belief of immortality.

2. That we might not lose all interest in the present world. Our duties are for the present here. But if we had the absolute certainty of intuition, that a world of glory stood awaiting us just across the grave, earthly pursuits might become wholly insipid, our duties here spiritless and forced, at least some of them, our attach-

ments languid, our affections all distorted, unbalanced, one sided. Discontent is rife enough now. Then we should be ever sighing for the wings of a dove, that we might flee away and be at rest. I have read somewhere of a French vessel, which had been absent for many years — tossed about on stormy seas and savage coasts till its loss was universally inferred, — returning at length to the little town in which the crew had left their families. As it neared the well-known shore, their rapture became inexpressible. They felt like men returned from the dead. Never had they expected to see those rocks and meadows, and cottages again. They distinctly recognized every well-beloved object, so dear to them from their childhood. Then they saw the inhabitants rushing from their houses in delighted recognition of the long-lost, long-despaired of vessel. The sailors perceived their wives and children hastening to the shore. They knew them. Were known by them. They saw their stretched out arms. They heard their cries of joy and welcome. They could not work the vessel into port. Every man leaped overboard, to swim ashore.

And so we, if we saw distinctly as with the eye of flesh, the heavenly shores thronged with all those beloved friends whom we had laid in the grave with breaking hearts; if we saw them stretching out their arms to us, and heard their well known voices calling us to come to them, truly, truly we should be overmuch tempted, for the dull and toilsome task of working our vessel into port. We should leap overboard, too, as soon as recklessness or fanaticism gained the ascenden-

cy over conscience. They now make havoc enough in this way. Then they would have their perfect work.

God has done all things wisely and kindly. He has favored us with a strong probability that we shall live again; this probability strengthening itself in proportion as we are faithful to its lessons and so indisposed to abuse it. This is enough for us, my happy friends. Only think of continued progress in the Christian virtues, and you will hear louder and louder voices within you, and around you, and above you, proclaiming in harmony, 'we are immortal.' Come then what may, so duty is done. Hasten, ye years. Take wings, time. Speed the day of life away. Its close shall but bring us to a day that will have no night.

'Decay, then, tenements of dust;
Pillars of earthly pride, decay:
A nobler mansion waits the just,
And Jesus has prepared the way.'

For Jesus, to conclude as I began, Jesus, the alpha and the omega, the first and the last of a Christian's trust, has laid his finger on these aspirations of natural reason, and in the name of God made our hopes sure.

'"Come, wanderers, to my Father's home;
Come, all ye wearied ones, and rest;"
Yes, sacred teacher, we will come,
Obey thee, love thee, and be blest.'

SERMON VIII.

BY REV. FRANCIS PARKMAN, BOSTON.

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

MATTHEW XVIII. 21–2.—THEN PETER CAME TO HIM AND SAID 'LORD, HOW OFTEN SHALL MY BROTHER SIN AGAINST ME, AND I FORGIVE HIM? TILL SEVEN TIMES?'

JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM, 'I SAY NOT UNTO THEE UNTIL SEVEN TIMES—BUT UNTIL SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN.'

The first reflection, which these words suggest, is a comparison of the narrow charity of man with the patient and generous charity of the gospel. When the apostle came to Jesus with this inquiry, he doubtless imagined, that he was making large allowance for the exercise of a forgiving temper; and that to pardon a brother, who had offended seven times, would be more than meeting the demands of religion. Had he connected this question with another, or but thought within himself 'How often may I need the forgiveness of my brother?'—he would have extended, I doubt not, the limits of indulgence. And his Master, who knew what was in man, how many in the intercourse of life and the diversities of human interests are the occasions of offence, how indispensable also to the character of his disciples is a forgiving temper, replies as in my text, 'I say not

unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven.'

The inquiry of Peter was probably founded on one of those traditions of the Jews so often condemned by our Lord, in which the letter was substituted for the spirit, and the word of God annulled by the commands of men.* The answer is an example of a form of speech not unusual with the writers of the Hebrew scriptures, in which a definite is employed for an indefinite number. And the meaning obviously is, that we are to set no bounds to a forgiving temper; that we must never be weary of receiving the returning brother. And this, as for many other reasons, so especially from the conviction that we continually need for ourselves the mercy of our heavenly Father, and are required to be imitators of Him, who is long-suffering to us-ward, abundant in goodness, and even 'waiteth to be gracious.'

On another occasion we find our Saviour enforcing the same duty by a motive, which we may all at once appreciate. 'When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any, that your Father also that is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.' The most superficial knowledge of ourselves, of our relations to God and to one another will show to us the import of this weighty sanction; and the circumstance with which the precept is connected intimates also the constancy with which it is to be performed. Charity to man, we are taught, is to be united with all prayer to

*'He that is wronged,' says the Talmud of Jerusalem, is forbidden to be difficult to pardon, for that is not the manner of the seed of Israel; and whosoever is most ready to pardon is most praise-worthy.' This is well. But here observe the limitation. 'They pardon,' says Jonathan, 'a man once that sins against another. Secondly, they pardon him; Thirdly, they pardon him; Fourthly, *They do not pardon.*'

God; and if we are not grossly deficient in the duties of piety, if we are not strangers to the mercy-seat, we shall be in the habitual exercise of a forgiving temper.

I propose in this discourse to speak of this great duty. It is inculcated with frequency and earnestness in the New-Testament, and the virtue it recommends is in accordance with the whole spirit of Christianity. I do not mean that the commandment to forgive injuries is peculiar to that system. For this is not true; and we are not permitted, nor is it in the least necessary, for the sake of illustrating the surpassing excellence of the gospel, to depreciate what of light and truth may be found in other dispensations. Every good gift, let it be remembered, is from above; and all truth, whether deduced from unaided reason, reflecting on the works, or from explicit revelation declaring the mind of God, proceeds from the Father of lights. Many good precepts concerning forgiveness may unquestionably be gathered from the writings of the heathen philosophers. Some of them taught, that there was wisdom and beauty in forgiving an enemy. 'Injuries received,' says Plato, 'ought not to be returned; and he is one of the best of men, who knows better than others how to bear injuries.' The same philosopher tells us, that in the exercise of our forgiveness we have a sure rule for our direction, viz. to imitate God, 'who hateth nothing which he hath made.' And there is a remarkable passage from Seneca, who however, being a contemporary with the apostles, might not have been unacquainted with the Christian system, in which he uses the same argument for the forgiveness of injuries, that is urged by our Saviour. 'God causes his sun to shine upon all; and

how many are unworthy of its light, whom it still invigorates and blesses!'

Nor are the Jewish scriptures without some admirable passages and examples to this effect. Saul, that jealous and vindictive monarch, is compelled to bear testimony to the superior virtue of David, and confesses, 'Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.' —'Say not thou,' instructs the wise preacher, 'I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord and he shall save thee.' Again, 'It is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression;' and without needlessly multiplying instances, which may occur to your own reflections, I will only remark that the fine passage adopted by St Paul in his summary of the Christian morality given in his epistle to the Romans—'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink',—is borrowed, as you may not be ignorant, from the book of the Proverbs.

But though some excellent precepts may be adduced, it cannot be denied, that the spirit of forgiveness, in the generous and comprehensive sense of the gospel, was very imperfectly understood, and still less practised either by Jews or Heathen. Among the latter there were not a few, who utterly denied its obligation; or if they admitted it among the virtues, placed it upon false grounds and limited its application to the first or to the slightest offence. Some of the stoics declared, that it made no part of a perfect character to overlook offences; while others even ridiculed all forbearance as the mark of a mean and pusilanimous spirit. To prove how narrow were the views of even the purest and most enlightened among them, I need but refer you

to the sentiment of Cicero, who gravely exhibits it as the characteristic of a good man, that he hurt no one, *unless he be provoked by an injury*; and he declares it to be his own determination to avenge whatever evil should be done to him, according to the provocations received. This too was the sentiment of the great mass of people; who, as might be expected, did not reach even the low standards of their teachers, and, as one has testified of them, thought little of forgiveness, but were implacable and revengeful.

In relation especially to the Jews we know with what malignity they regarded foreigners and all, that were not 'of Israel.' They thought themselves justified in doing all possible harm to such as had injured them. It was said to them of old time, or by their ancient teachers, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' They were told by the same authority 'thou shalt love thy neighbor, but hate thine enemy.' And therefore our Lord in announcing the requirements of his religion delivers what must indeed have seemed to them a new commandment. 'But I say unto you, Love your enemies. Bless them, that curse you; do good to them, that hate you, and pray for them, that despitefully use you and persecute you.' And this—'that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven.'

I might urge this essential duty by a variety of motives;—as a part of the great law of love, founded on the intrinsic excellence of the virtue itself, its reasonableness, beauty and utility. I might show that it is expressly enjoined as the command of God, bearing with it the sanctions of His unchangeable truth; and approving itself to every view, which we can take of man's rela-

tions and destiny. But I apprehend there is no consideration, at once so easily understood, or which will be found to exert a more effectual influence than that illustrated by our Lord with surpassing beauty in the parable connected with the text—the great and constant need in which we all of us stand, of the forgiveness of God and of one another.

1. Take now the question as proposed by Peter to his Lord, 'How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?' And before we attempt to answer it, let us revolve in our own breasts such inquiries as these. 'How often do I need the forgiveness of God and of my fellow creatures, and what would be my condition if forgiveness were refused to me?' Such reflections humility will always be ready to suggest, and they cannot fail to quicken our compassion for others. For let any man, I do not mean of the presumptuous transgressors, or hardened sinners, but of the vast multitude, who on the whole pass well in the world, let such an one but reflect how many have been his offences against God; let him enlighten his conscience as to the extent of his duties, and the spirit as well as letter of the divine commands; let him remember if he can, his omissions, negligences, and positive sins; let him think of the months and the years of his life, in which he has gone on neglecting some one duty, or violating some one command; with all this let him count, if he can, the sins of his thoughts, the forgetfulness or insensibility of his heart to the loving-kindness of his God, and so far from indulging an implacable or unrelenting spirit, he will be ready to admit, and that in no formal or technical sense, but with the conviction of a

hearty penitence, 'that the greatest offender within the compass of every man's knowledge is himself.' Conscience will bring to his remembrance many foolish and wicked thoughts indulged; many blessings enjoyed for which he has made no returns; many opportunities of doing good neglected; many motions of God's spirit, and admonitions of his Providence, and rebukes of his own conscience stifled or disregarded. He will call to mind how often he has suffered himself to be engrossed by vain cares; to be betrayed by debasing passion; how small has been the influence of the choicest means of grace to improve his character or to sanctify his heart; and with only an ordinary measure of humility—he will be ready to say, 'If thou, Lord, shouldst be extreme to mark iniquity, how should I stand before thee?

He may not indeed, as we have all the while been supposing, have committed any flagrant enormities. He may be pure from the greater transgressions. But he may know of himself what he cannot know of another, that even his lesser offences are attended with many aggravations; that he may have sinned against light and knowledge and numberless advantages, which his neighbor or his friend, who has offended him, may never have enjoyed. And when he realizes that all his dependence must be upon the mercy of his God; that without that mercy, as declared by the son of his love, Jesus Christ, he must be helpless and miserable, how can he refuse to exercise charity for his brother.

When he remembers, too, his need of the forgiveness of his fellow men; how much he may be indebted for their favorable opinion to their ignorance of his whole character, and that if they knew him as well as he

knows or ought to know himself, he could maintain himself in their regards only by the largest measures of their kindness, he would find even in policy alone a commanding motive to this duty.

But besides all this, which may be regarded as a certain general dependance on our brother's charity, may not conscience remind us of some special offences against him? Have we never violated the sacredness of friendship; never thought, or spoken, or done that which would grieve our brother? Have we never wilfully or inadvertently, through neglect or through malice, committed aught against the feelings, rights, or expectations of another, wounded his good name, disappointed his just hopes, or planted a thorn in his susceptible heart. Who can tell how oft he may have thus offended? And who can safely refuse a lenity to others, which he so much needs for himself. In yielding to an implacable spirit, we therefore not only sin against the great law of love, but we betray a strange ignorance or insensibility to our own wants. We magnify beyond all proportion the offences committed against ourselves, and overlook or think lightly of perhaps greater, which we commit against others. What unreasonableness and injustice are there in the feelings and habits of men upon this subject! And it was for the rebuke of such a spirit, that our Lord delivered the beautiful parable immediately following the text, in which the servant, who had been forgiven a debt of ten thousand talents, went forth and cast a fellow-servant into prison for a debt of one hundred pence. 'O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee that debt because thou desiredst me. Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee?'

II. I would recommend this duty from its great necessity, from the frequency and urgency of the occasions, on which it may be exercised;—a consideration, which, though it may not affect the nature of the obligation, may at least show the utility, or practical importance of the virtue. Now it is impossible, as our Lord declared, that offences should not come, however blamable may be they by whom they come. Occasions arise daily among friends and neighbors, and members of the same family. Our various situations and dispositions, giving birth to wants on the one hand, and calling for kind services on the other; our opposing interests and incompatible claims; an undue estimation of ourselves, and a corresponding indifference or undervaluing of the characters and claims of others;—here, a want of accommodation, and there a selfish regard to personal convenience, petty accommodations, and imaginary rights;—enthusiastic notions of friendship, begetting expectations of those whom we choose to call friends, which, founded in imaginary views of their duties and our deserts, must of necessity be disappointed;—suffering ourselves to be involved in a perplexity or hurry of affairs, and liable therefore to be provoked by trivial interruptions,—these, and such as these, open innumerable sources of complaint. It were endless to recount the ways by which injuries may arise, when pride and selfishness conspire in the same bosom, and the ill temper of one man meets the ill temper of another, with nothing to control them but their own wayward passions;—when an opinion or a taste differing from our own; a degree of earnestness or indifference upon any subject, which we cannot ac-

cord with; the slightest peculiarity of manners or of speech; a want of conformity to what, under any circumstances, we may have imagined decorous or respectful; a gesture or a look; the tone too high, or too low for our taste; the limb not moving itself aright, or the door left grating upon the ear of the sensitive—yea, trifles not to be described, or if described, would but expose the very extremity of pettishness or caprice, may be sufficient to stop the current of kind feelings, to make a man an offender for a word, and at length turn into enmity the tenderest friendships.

III. From the frequent occasions for the exercise of forgiveness, we may easily deduce the wretchedness as well as baseness of an unforgiving temper. It dooms a man to endless contests. It may keep his soul in a continual tempest. By the constitution of our nature, suffering is connected with all sin, but especially with the sins of malice and ill-will. He that yields himself to his rancorous feelings, and cherishes anger in his breast, he who suffers his imagination to feed itself upon the wrongs he has received, or only thinks he has received—that man is the destroyer of his own happiness. 'To him,' as saith God of the wicked, 'there is no peace.' There is nothing in the richest bounties of divine providence, nothing in the fairest condition of earthly prosperity in which he can be placed, that can give *that* man peace. His table becomes his snare, and that which God sent for his welfare a trap. He is as the troubled sea, which cannot rest. And when this evil spirit goes forth into the domestic abode, how fruitful is it of disorder, wretchedness and sin! It separates those whom nature and na-

ture's God had made one. It makes anger and jealousy, and every evil work where there should be love and peace, joy in each other's happiness, sacrifices for each other's comfort, labors and prayers for each other's virtue. Better then, as saith the wise man, is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices, of sumptuous feasting and strife.

IV. Should I speak of the fitness and reasonableness of this virtue, I should ask you to observe, how well suited it is by its very nature, and in all its influences to the nature and condition of man; how reasonable and how becoming, that creatures as we are, frail, sinful and dependant, should not only be humble before God, but kind to our fellow-men, pitiful and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Jesus Christ hath forgiven us. I might speak of its beauty and dignity, for how much does it breathe of heaven. It is an image of the divine compassion; a ray of God's boundless mercy, even of that mercy, which is our only hope, a pledge 'of that true grace, wherein we stand.' It is the indication, too, of a genuine greatness of soul, forming high conceptions of virtue, but knowing the difficulty of attaining it; severe to itself, but mindful of the temptations, and considerate therefore of the infirmities of their fellow-creatures. They, in truth, who are the slowest to forgive themselves, and stand least in need of indulgence, will be found the readiest to forgive others; to interpret favorably their motives and conduct; and if they have fallen, to encourage, and, if possible, restore them by their charity.

Should I speak of the good influences of this spirit, I might show its happy effects upon individuals and communities. It is of itself an unfailing spring of pleasure. It is the very temper, in which, as has been said by another, 'we relish and enjoy our own being;' and our souls are made meet for an habitation of God, who is love; and whoso dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him.

It is obvious from what has been urged of the obligation of forgiveness, that it involves a corresponding duty in him who is forgiven. All social obligations are by their nature reciprocal. And if the injured is commanded to forgive, the offender is first required to repent, that he may be forgiven. This is the only, but it is at the same time, the indispensable condition of all forgiveness both with God and with men. 'The Lord your God is gracious, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye turn unto him.' Nothing, however, can be clearer than the terms, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord who will have mercy, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' The fulness of the promise is certainly not more remarkable than the distinctness of the condition. And on the same grounds that we hope for the compassion of our heavenly Father, may we look for the forgiveness of our fellow-men. To this purpose our Lord commands, 'If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.' It is his to acknowledge his fault, to seek reconciliation, and to prove the genuineness of his repentance by repairing, as far as possible, the in-

jury. It is then yours to forgive him; 'nay,' adds the Teacher, 'should he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him'. 'If,' says also a judicious writer on the subject,* 'we should any of us, at any time, be so unhappy, as through inadvertence, or the warmth of passion, or the surprise of some unexpected and extraordinary temptation, to offend our brother, by any injurious and wrong conduct towards him, let us have the courage and honor, the resolution and firmness of mind, the integrity and virtue, candidly to acknowledge it, to express our ingenuous concern for it, a settled purpose of acting with greater caution for the future, and our willingness to make all the reparation that we have the power of making. This is a conduct rational in its nature. The law of equity is the law of piety; and no man can be a reasonable, virtuous, or religious one, but he, who is so careful as never to offend, or having offended is as careful to retract the offence, to reconcile himself to his injured brother, and never willingly to offend or injure him more.'

I will conclude by summing up in a word a few weighty suggestions, which may help us in this duty, but at which the limits of a discourse only allow me to advert.

When then, we feel tempted to withhold our forgiveness from a brother, let us remember how often we forgive ourselves, and how readily we can palliate as infirmities, and even vindicate as some slight excesses of virtue, or leanings to virtue, what our neighbor's more impartial judgment condemns as our sins. Let us recol-

*Dr Samuel Chandler.

lect how much we hope, perhaps expect, to be forgiven of God, whose long-suffering has borne with us for months and years in far greater offences than our fellow-creature or fellow-sinner has ever committed against us. Finally, 'consider thine end,' says the Son of Sirach, 'and let enmity cease, for he that revengeth shall find vengeance of the Lord.' Yes, brethren, let us but send forth our thoughts to the judgment of the great day, when we shall stand together at the tribunal of God, expectants and dependants on a boundless mercy; and then we shall understand the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'when ye pray, forgive if ye have aught against any. For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.'

SERMON IX.

BY REV. CAZNEAU PALFREY, WASHINGTON, D. C.

WAYS OF PLEASANTNESS AND PEACE.

PROVERBS III. 17.—HER WAYS ARE WAYS OF PLEASANTNESS AND ALL HER PATHS ARE PEACE.

These words are spoken of wisdom, by which throughout this passage of the book of Proverbs is meant religion,—the highest practical wisdom. They are opposed to a notion, which, it is to be feared, is too often entertained, that religion is a system of arbitrary requirements, a compliance with which is absolutely necessary to the attainment of certain rewards which have been annexed to it, but which have no natural connexion with it;—that holiness is not a good thing in itself, but a heavy price which must be paid for a future and distant good. To this idea the words of the text are opposed. They not only imply that the great object to which religion conducts us is an unspeakable good, but they assert that the ways by which she leads to it are ways of pleasantness and paths of peace.

In discoursing from these words, I shall endeavor to show that holiness is not so much the condition of happiness as it is happiness itself;—that God has so ordered our moral nature, that to be most truly and in the highest degree happy we must be good;—that it is an unchangeable law of the universe, extending to every moral being, and, notwithstanding the calamities incident to this life as a state of probation, applicable to the present as well as to every future period of existence, that holiness of heart and life confers a more perfect and satisfactory pleasure than any other course of conduct.

The first and fundamental proof of this proposition is, the simple fact that the law of righteousness is imposed by God. What reason worthy of the divine nature and character can be given why it was imposed, but that obedience to it will promote our true happiness? Can we for a moment imagine that the Father of all can take pleasure in beholding his rational children render him an arbitrary and unnecessary service which has no end but to manifest his power over them and to advance his glory? Could his power be more strikingly illustrated by any obedience thus paid than by the original creation of us and of all things? Could he receive any accession of glory from the compelled homage of beings whose existence he continually sustains and whose powers he continually supplies? We can easily imagine such motives in an earthly sovereign. Finite power is measured by the number of minds and bodies which it holds beneath its sway, and the ease and completeness with which it bends them to its purposes and makes them subservient to its interest and pleasure; and according

to commonly received notions of greatness, it is glorious to exhibit this power by enforcing obedience to capricious commands. But shall we degrade the divine majesty by forming our ideas of it even from the purest and most exalted human greatness? The self-existent and allsufficient God is not worshipped with men's hands as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth unto all life, breath, and all things. It is indeed most true that all the works of God's hand, and the whole course of his government and providence, all the beauty and grandeur of the visible creation, and all the spiritual capacities of his intelligent creatures show forth his glory.

But what is the nature of this glory? Does it resemble that of the Eastern despot, who sits apart in gloomy magnificence, exulting in the exhibition of empty splendor and useless riches, and in the abject and trembling submission of unwilling slaves? No. But it is like that true glory of the ruler who wishes to manifest his power only in acts of beneficence to his subjects, who would impose on them no restraints which are not designed for their true god, and desires no homage but that of love and obedience from the heart.

This reasoning receives strong confirmation from an attention to the analogy of nature. Look around on the works of God and say what appears to be the great end of all creation. It is not to be mistaken. It is happiness. All animate creatures are fitted to enjoy it;—all inanimate to minister to it. You observe every class of beings partaking of pleasure in its allotted sphere and according to its apportioned capacity of enjoyment. Each has its peculiar taste and is provided with abun-

dant means of gratifying it, and all are bound to their respective stations by the control of unerring instinct.

Amidst all this benevolent providence for the insects that sport their little day in the sunbeam and are then swept away, and for the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field that perish, can we doubt that man too was made for happiness? Certainly not. But what is the peculiar happiness designed for him? It cannot be the mere animal gratifications of sense or the attainment of any of this world's goods. These are in their nature finite and cannot satisfy the boundless and ever restless desires of man, which are continually reaching forth after something higher and more perfect than what is in actual possession. The peculiar happiness designed for man by his Creator is holiness,—the pursuit of moral excellence. In this alone can he find a substantial and soul-satisfying pleasure. In this alone can he make continual advances and continually find new objects presented commensurate with his increased power of acquisition and new gratifications to fill his enlarged capacity of enjoyment. The same goodness, which imposed on the inferior animals the law of instinct, imposed on man this moral law, and for the same purpose,—for the promotion of happiness. He is not indeed bound like them to a necessary obedience so that he cannot by any possibility miss his happiness. But this freedom is an attribute of his superior nature. It is this which makes him an improvable being;—which if it renders him capable of error, also gives him a capacity of exalted virtue;—if it makes him liable to sin, confers on him the power of repentance and reformation. But though this law could not have been made absolutely necessary

without altering our nature as moral beings, yet it has been enforced by such strong motives and solemn sanctions and with a reiteration indicating such a tender solicitude in our heavenly Father for the good of his intelligent creatures, that if our hearts were kept properly alive to moral influences, we should feel ourselves drawn by the bond of love and gratitude and admiration of all that is lovely and excellent, as by a sort of moral necessity, to give ourselves wholly up to a devout conformity to the Divine will.

The doctrine of the text is yet further confirmed by the testimony of experience. In the ordinary course of Providence goodness produces happiness, whilst pain and misery are the consequences of sin. Observe for example the pure and temperate man. What a true enjoyment of the present life does his virtue secure to him. He possesses a sound mind in a sound body. He preserves a perennial cheerfulness, which renders him constantly susceptible of pleasure from the most common sources. He has kept in tune that exquisite instrument which was intended to harmonize with creation and to yield its melody to every, even the slightest impulse. Now mark the pampered child of excess. What do you read in his wan and dejected countenance, but disease, the consequence of intemperate indulgence, self-dissatisfaction that he has debased his heaven-born faculties on objects so unworthy, shame in the presence of his fellow men, despair that he has crushed his pleasures in his eagerness to seize them, that he has palsied his susceptibility and exhausted his resources of enjoyment and has nothing to look forward to, in the way he has chosen, but wretchedness and inanity? Which of

these two is the way of pleasantness and peace?—the supposed flowery path of sin, or that of true wisdom? It would be easy to extend these remarks to any or to all the other virtues; to show that the benevolent man in denying himself that he may employ his means for the benefit of others, derives from the exercise of kind affections and from the consciousness of the love and esteem of his fellow men a more true and satisfactory pleasure than the most lavish self-indulgence could afford;—that the upright man who in all his transactions, acts as though the eye of his fellow man were on his heart, enjoys a peace and a fearless confidence for which the highest wages of unrighteousness would be a miserable compensation;—that the industrious man who diligently employs his powers in some useful and honest occupation is happier even amidst the cares and toils of business, than he who is without care, without responsibility, without employment, and consequently without a place in the community.

But there are yet more necessary and intimate consequences of goodness and of sin than these. I mean the approving and disapproving judgments of conscience. The distribution of external good and evil sometimes appears to be very unequally made. The unrighteous man is seen to be prosperous and triumphant. The very excess and boldness of his wickedness has perhaps secured his success, whilst it renders him callous to public opinion and enables him to enjoy his prosperity apparently without a single circumstance to mar his satisfaction. On the other hand, the good man is sometimes led even by his regard to duty into danger and loss, poverty and disgrace, and it may be to death itself. But a slight con-

sideration of such cases will teach us that they form no exception to the truth of the text. They only serve to show how little external circumstances have to do with true happiness. A strictly righteous retribution which is constantly going on within the soul corrects these seemingly unequal allotments. There is a celestial power in the consciousness of having done right which can inspire peace and self-satisfaction in any condition into which duty may lead. I do not say that the tendency of religion is to produce a stoical indifference to good and evil. I do not say that, provided he may secure success with a clear conscience, a good man should have no choice between misfortune and success; but I do say that between suffering with a good conscience and success without one, the balance of present and immediate happiness is so unspeakably in favor of the former, that no man capable of reflection would seriously and deliberately give his preference to the latter. With respect to the enjoyment of the prosperous wicked man there is great liability to error. It may be, that for the purpose of deceiving others, or, as I believe is more frequently the case, with the hope of deceiving himself into the belief that he is at ease, he may be able to assume a happy exterior, or he may succeed in banishing thought for a season by a mad and intoxicating career of pleasure; but could we look within we should see the never dying worm secretly gnawing at his heart and creating there a bitter anguish which is but mocked by a parade of the external means of pleasure. We should observe an instinctive shrinking from reflection which betrays a consciousness that his supposed happiness will not bear to be examined. And when reflection forces itself on the

soul as it sometimes will, then we should read the sinner's own estimate of the wages of his sin in his willingness, his eagerness to throw away his unrighteous gains, if with them he could throw off the load of guilt and misery they have laid upon his soul. And suppose conscience has indeed wholly ceased to disturb him with its reproaches. Suppose that by long habits of sin and of neglecting its admonitions it has been seared into insensibility. Call you this freedom from uneasiness true peace? It is as much like the genuine peace of a satisfied conscience as the torpor of a palsied frame is like the repose of healthful and refreshing sleep. A man in this condition is far removed from true happiness, and before he can reach it he must pass through the agonies of remorse, the deep sorrows of contrition and the toils and pains of reformation.

In what has been said, I have not been urging the safety and the prudence of preserving a decent exterior, of avoiding those extremes of sin which may ruin the health and the reputation and bring down the bitterest reproaches of conscience. The considerations which have been urged to show that goodness is accompanied with a present happiness apply with peculiar force to the highest degrees of inward Gospel holiness. I know that the sober devotee of the world, who is led by a prudential regard to his own interest to be temperate in his life and fair in his dealings, may pass through life with apparent happiness and satisfaction in the pursuits which occupy him. But, besides that he is continually made to feel that he is at the mercy of circumstances over which he has no control, and is ever exposed to chance and accident, even if he were allow-

ed to make a fuller experiment than man ever yet made of the whole extent of the satisfaction which earthly goods are capable of affording, he would then most deeply and painfully feel that they cannot fill the desires of an immortal soul, and he would be tormented with a restless craving after something higher and better. We cannot with impunity overlook the fact, that moral and religious capacities and powers make a part of our nature. We are made capable of knowing God, of loving him, of adoring his infinite perfection, of rendering him a reasonable service. These faculties are the highest part of our nature. The exercise of them is the highest happiness we are capable of enjoying;—the highest we are capable of even in the present life;—the highest we shall ever be capable of in any state of being so long as our moral nature remains what it is. It is imperfect here, only because our virtue is imperfect. But it grows with the growth of our virtue and strengthens with its strength. And when in a higher state of being our virtue shall be perfected, it will fill the soul with a full and satisfying felicity. How intimately then, how indissolubly, are happiness and misery connected with character. We may as well hope to escape from ourselves as from the consequences of our actions. How mistaken the idea that heaven and hell are local habitations;—that heaven is a place in which the wicked would enjoy as much as the righteous, if they could be admitted into it;—that hell is a place whose atmosphere of misery would wither the purest spirit that should enter it. No.

> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.

It would be easy to show you, my friends, how per-

fectly this doctrine agrees with the uniform tenor of the gospel. What are we taught was the great object of the mission of Jesus? It was to save men from sin. He came indeed to save men from the misery and ruin which are the consequences of their sins, but to save them from these by saving them from sin itself, the necessary and invariable cause of wretchedness;—by revealing such truths, presenting such motives, inculcating such precepts, setting such a pure and perfect example, as should lead men to abhor and forsake their sins, and enter on the paths of holiness, peace and happiness. And accordingly those who have embraced the gospel, and have begun to govern their hearts and lives by its truths and precepts are represented as having already entered into eternal life and enjoying a foretaste of the happiness of Heaven. Natural death, as it offers no interruption to the pursuits and hopes of the Christian, but rather introduces him into a region where those pursuits may be more successfully followed and those hopes will ripen into perfect fruition, is passed over as a trifling circumstance. 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in me,' said Jesus, 'shall never die'—and again, 'verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but *hath passed* from death unto life.'

If happiness is thus intimately dependent on character, it follows that no condition of salvation can be substituted for a holy life, and that with this no other condition can be necessary. Are we conscious of an habitual and devoted obedience to the law of God and of joy and peace in our obedience? Our present happiness is an earnest of our future. The character which produces such blessed fruits here, will accompany us to heaven; and there it will bring forth more abundantly; for it

will be transplanted to the congenial climate of holiness; where the blight of sin shall no more visit it, where the eternal sunshine of God's presence shall beam upon it, and the abundant dews of his Holy Spirit shall continually freshen it. On the other hand, if we are conscious of no such obedience, it is folly to lay our hopes on any other foundation. So long as we retain our character, we cannot be happy, either in this life or in the future. Our only resource, our only hope is in a change of character. And that change can be effected only by ourselves. Every man's character is the work of his own hands. If our salvation be ever wrought out, the work must be accomplished by our own free wills. No other being can accomplish it for us. Jesus may set before us the pure precepts of his gospel, he may present to our minds its glorious truths and commanding motives and exhibit his own living example of spotless holiness, but after all it remains with ourselves, whether we will obey those precepts, and open our understandings to those truths, and our hearts to the love and imitation of that perfect character. It is a strange mistake to think of holiness being forced upon the soul. The supposition that we can be made either better or worse without an act of our own wills is utterly inconsistent with our whole moral nature. The supposition of our being happy without holiness is equally so. Unless we make ourselves good, Omnipotence itself,—I speak it with reverence—Omnipotence itself cannot make us happy.

If the great truth, that holiness is happiness, were suitably impressed upon our minds, with what ardor should we press on in the pursuit of it;—with an ardor as much greater than that with which we see men following after the pleasures and profits of this life, as the

pursuits of heaven are superior to those of earth. Instead of proceeding along the path of duty with timid, irresolute, reluctant steps, we should urge our way eagerly onward, with the boldness and perseverance with which men press toward a certain and incalculable good. That unbounded and ever restless desire after perfect happiness which is continually prompting so many mad endeavors would be fixed and concentrated upon the pursuit of real excellence. Instead of anxiously inquiring how little is absolutely essential to be done, we should be eager continually to learn more of our duty that we might be able to obey more perfectly and feel more of the joy of obedience. What folly, on this view of the subject, is every moment's delay of attention to religion. I waive every consideration of the danger arising from the uncertainty of life, and of difficulty increasing every moment with the growing power of habit, and I ask what can we do better for present and immediate happiness than to enter on a religious life? From what can we expect purer pleasure? What can yield us a fuller satisfaction? In what pursuit can we embark with a more perfect assurance against disappointment? What a strange error concerning the true nature of religion and our own happiness, to talk of deferring our attention to religion till we have tasted a little more of the pleasures of the world. Here is the true, essential happiness which God designed for our souls, placed within our reach, soliciting our acceptance, and every moment we neglect to put forth our hand to take it is lost to the true purposes of our being;—and shall we madly play about in pursuit of a vain and delusive phantom? My friends, let us make haste and delay not to enter on those ways which alone are ways of pleasantness and paths of peace.

SERMON X.

BY REV. JOSEPH FIELD, OF WESTON.

ON ERRONEOUS VIEWS OF THE MORAL STATE AND CHARACTER OF MANKIND.

1 KINGS XIX. 14. 18.—AND HE SAID, I HAVE BEEN VERY JEALOUS FOR THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS—BECAUSE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL HAVE FORSAKEN THY COVENANT; THROWN DOWN THINE ALTARS AND SLAIN THY PROPHETS WITH THE SWORD; AND I, EVEN I ONLY AM LEFT; AND THEY SEEK MY LIFE TO TAKE IT AWAY.

AND THE LORD SAID UNTO HIM, YET I HAVE LEFT ME SEVEN THOUSAND IN ISRAEL—ALL THE KNEES THAT HAVE NOT BOWED UNTO BAAL AND EVERY MOUTH WHICH HATH NOT KISSED HIM.

The passage of scripture which I have selected as the theme of my present discourse, and which doubtless is familiar to you all, my friends, affords us as I conceive, a striking illustration of the imperfection of human judgment, in respect to its decisions upon the spiritual state and character of the individual and of society. It teaches us, likewise, not to judge hastily and rashly of the moral and religious character of our fellow-creatures. This is an evil habit, into which I believe mankind are very prone to fall. For, as in the natural world a single cloud sometimes hides the sun from our view, and as one striking defect in any particular feature of the human countenance destroys its beauty, and often gives a sinister expression to the rest,—so in respect to the human character, one prominent

act of guilt in the individual casts its dark shadow over many a fair and beautiful trait of excellence, while the public vices that meet the eye in every community give to society its general character, and throw far back into the shade the many retired virtues whose kindly influences are known and felt and appreciated only in the walks of private life.

It is true that the deceitfulness of the heart is every where great, and that every where man is in a greater or less degree under the influence of prejudice and passion—is too easily swayed and overcome by temptation. But are we justified therefore in shutting our eyes against the bright spots that appear in the human character? or in denying that there is much of truth blended with error, and much of what is good and virtuous and holy mingled with the sin and corruption that are found upon earth?

The fact is, that in considering the characters of our fellow-men we are insensibly led to judge of the whole by a part, and to draw general conclusions from partial and imperfect views. Hence, like the prophet of old, we often err in judgment in regard to the moral and religious state of mankind. It is the desponding language of piety in every age, 'They have slain thy servants with the sword, and I only am left.' Thanks be to God, in every age too it is the language of human weakness and ignorance, for in every age there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

Let us consider some of the sources of error in respect to the judgment we pass upon the moral and religious character of the individual and of society, and make such observations as may lead to the

adoption of more just and enlightened views upon this subject.

Whence then is our knowledge of mankind derived, and whence the erroneous views we entertain of human nature—of the moral and religious state and character of the individual and of society.

In the first place I would observe, that our knowledge of human nature is in part derived from the representations which history gives us of the state and character of man. And this I conceive to be one cause of misconception and error. We go to the page of the historian, and there mark the progress of human society, and study the prominent features, the strong outlines of the human mind. And I acknowledge that it is a page too often written in blood; that the picture there drawn of man, that the scenes there presented to the eye, are, with some splendid exceptions, appalling in the extreme. I acknowledge that the general impressions which the page of the historian leaves upon the pure and devout mind, are of a nature to extort from us the desponding language of the prophet. But let us remember, my friends, that history, profane history, presents to us the worst features of the human character. It is the annals of the great and of the wealthy and of the ambitious. It is the annals of courts, of kings, and of the favorites of kings. It searches out the secret springs of those revolutions which shake the foundations of society. It investigates the causes of the rise and progress and decay of empires. It is the province of history to speak of public men and of public measures, of wars and tumults which have their origin in the bad passions and unhallowed desires of the human heart. The subjects in which history delights are

of a worldly nature, and the individuals of whom she treats, and whose portrait she holds up to your view, are men whose very situation peculiarly exposes them to the corrupting influences of the world. Thus while the public vices of society and the crimes of aspiring individuals are recorded, nothing is said of the many who are far removed from the noise and guilt of these active scenes. Nothing is said of those multitudes which no man can number, who spend their days in quietness and peace, in virtuous and happy security, in the habitual observance of moral and religious duty. These history does not bring into view. It speaks not of those fine traits of character, of those thousand and ten thousand acts of self-denial and disinterestedness, which are exhibited in humble life. No, the deeds it loves most are the exploits of the warrior, the schemes of the wily politician, the crimes of the restless and unprincipled demagogue. An Alexander, a Cæsar, a Cataline—these are the names that thicken along the page of history, while the innumerable virtues that dignify and adorn private station are left untold, and thousands of far more exalted minds and nobler worth are daily passing away unnoticed and unknown.

Such then is History. And shall we say that here is found a faithful delineation of the human character? Shall we be told that this imperfect outline, this distorted picture, this partial view of human nature, is a fair representation of man? No, my friends, no. As well may you judge of the common course and serenity of nature by the violence of the tempest and the desolating rockings of the earthquake.

Let the pious and devout mind then,—ready at the view which history gives of man to sink like Elijah into

despondency and despair in respect to the moral and religious state of the world,—be encouraged by the reflection, that the view which history presents of mankind is partial and imperfect;—and that, as under the reign of an Ahab, and of a Jezebel even, there was found a prophet whose sanctity elevated him above the common frailties of human nature, and thousands who had not fallen into the prevailing errors and vices of the day, so, in every age, there are the good blended with the evil; and in the worst of times, multitudes who are not borne on the polluted stream of corruption and depravity; multitudes, of whom it may be said, that they have not bowed the knee to Baal, nor offered to him the kiss of homage and adoration.

In the second place, our knowledge of human nature is derived from personal observation, and our observation extends only to the external appearance. We judge by appearances. And this I conceive to be another cause that we often make a wrong estimate of human character.

We judge by appearance; and what appearance does the world present to the eye of the upright and devout observer? A bustling scene of active life, thronging multitudes pressing on towards the accomplishment of their temporal schemes and purposes; here providing for the exigencies of the present moment, there taking thought for the morrow; here struggling for the necessaries of life, there rioting in its luxuries and seeking its distinctions. Look around you, says the man of God, and see how occupied by present interests, how immersed in worldly pursuits are the great mass of mankind; some giving themselves up to habits of evil, some making innocent gratification the business of life. And of

the rest is it not true, that all their time, or at least that a great portion of their time, is devoted to worldly acquisition, to the pursuit of temporal good? Whereever you find man, do you not find him thus engaged in the secular concerns of life? his thoughts and feelings absorbed by the world? Surely the fear of God is not amidst such scenes, nor the love of God in such minds. The hearts of such men cannot be right in the sight of God.

So thought the prophet of Israel as he gazed upon the prevailing idolatry of his times. The covenant of God is forsaken. The altars of God are thrown down, and I only am left. May not we, my friends, fall into the same error and judge hastily, rashly, erroneously?

Before then you pass this sweeping sentence of general condemnation upon your fellow creatures, remember the trite but wholesome proverb, that appearances are often deceitful. Reflect that man is urged to active occupation by the necessities of his condition and the wants of his nature. The earth does not spontaneously yield to him its fruits. It requires the labors of the husbandman. Nor do communities exist and flourish without care and effort. They need the energies of the human mind, and the cooperation of individuals in their support. Yes, the means of present subsistence are to be obtained,and something laid by for the hour when unexpected disease, or the natural decay of nature is upon us. Society has its demands. The calls of the age are to be answered. The interests of learning are to be promoted, governments are to be established, laws are to be administered, civil and religious and benevolent institutions are to be fostered; and thus man is, by the necessities of his

condition and the wants of his nature, compelled to devote much of his time to worldly pursuits. In doing this he is in the way of his duty, and we may not think therefore that all this bustle of active life is to be totally disapproved and condemned, however it may exhibit an appearance of prevailing worldly mindedness.

We should reflect also that a life of active occupation is not inconsistent with religious feeling. The solitary, in his lonely retreat and amidst the wilds of savage nature, far removed from the haunts of men, may indeed have his feelings kindle into strong and rapturous emotion, as he gives himself up to uninterrupted meditation and prayer. But solitude, retirement, however useful and salutary at proper seasons,is not the state for which man was created; nor is it in solitude only that religious affections may be cherished. The glow of devotion may be with us and upon us in every situation; in the midst of society as well as in the house of God, or amidst the quiet scenes of retired life. Yes, my friends, religious feelings, holy desires, good thoughts and purposes spring up in the mind without the doors of the sanctuary, and at seasons and in circumstances apparently most unfavorable and inappropriate.

Besides, be it remembered, that religion does not consist altogether in ritual services or devotional feeling. Religion is action, a rule of life, a practical principle, an operating cause. A man is religious whenever his actions flow from a sense of religious obligation; and the fear of God and the love of God may be motives influencing us to duty, even when our thoughts are immediately upon the business of life.

Say not then, of all those multitudes, whose minds and hearts are apparently engrossed with the necessary

occupations of the present state, that they find no time for serious reflection. You judge only by appearances. You know not how many holy aspirations are breathed forth amidst the bustling scenes of active life, nor how much the influence of religious principle is upon mankind in their social dealings and intercourse.

Moreover, you are to consider that you see your fellowmen, for the most part, only in society, only in the world, only in those situations in which the mind must necessarily, from the very nature of its occupations, appear worldly. Doubtless if you follow many an individual from the public theatre of the busy world to his domestic retreat, to his solitary chamber, to the secrecy of the closet, to his nightly pillow, you will find that he does have his seasons of religious feeling, that he does find time, leisure, for sober reflection. You will hear accents of supplication and entreaty from lips never before thought to have uttered the language of prayer.

We may not think, therefore, because too many attach to earthly possessions a value they do not possess, that all who actively and zealously engage in those pursuits in which success is to be obtained only by persevering exertion are unmindful of the importance of religion, are forgetful of the important concerns of eternity. No, my friends, the judgment that is founded on appearances only is partial and imperfect, is erring and false. Among the thronging crowds which to your short sighted vision seem falling down before the mammon of this world, there may be thousands who have not worshiped at his altar. Minds there are there, impressed with a deep sense of religious obligation. Hearts there are there, which glow with the love of God and virtue.

In the third and last place, our knowledge of mankind is derived in part from their speculative opinions. We judge of character by modes of faith, and err in our judgment of the spiritual state and condition of others, by making our own faith the standard of religious truth and moral attainment.

Here is an individual whose earnest inquiries after truth, whose diligent investigation of scripture has resulted in the reception of particular principles and doctrines. In these he honestly believes christian truth to consist. His views of Christianity induce him to consider a belief in these as essential to salvation. Every departure from these principles and doctrines inflicts a wound upon his religious sensibility. He looks around him and mourns over the errors that creep into the minds of his fellowmen. He fears that error is the result of improper influences, of preconceived opinion, or perhaps of habits of evil which blunt the moral perceptions, bias the judgment, and lead the understanding astray. He laments too, that there should be so many, not altogether, but only almost Christians. He would that those whom he cannot but respect and love for their virtues, could embrace the same religious views with himself, could experience the same feelings, could enjoy the same rapturous emotions; but until they do, with all their many traits of excellence, he can only say of them, that they are not far from the kingdom of heaven.

But my friends, the example of the prophet should be a warning to us against forming hasty and desponding opinions of the spiritual state of others. Look among the numerous sects that divide the Christian world. You will find that piety, holiness, the christian graces and virtues, do not belong exclusively to any denomination.

Here is one who differs from you in respect to doctrines which you consider to be the essentials of christian faith. But he has sought truth with as earnest a love of truth as yourself; and though you differ from each other in speculative opinion, yet you are both equally sincere, equally desirous of doing that which you think to be duty. I find you both practising the same virtues, and to each of you may it be said by the Son of man at the last day, 'I was sick and in prison and ye visited me.' Your prayers ascend from different temples, but they proceed equally from the heart, and believe me, they will be equally heard and accepted and answered by Him who readeth the heart.

Others again have not, you say, the zeal and fervor you wish. But is their piety less genuine and sincere? It may be that they have not the same natural warmth of temperament which you possess;—or they may think that the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, and prefer the secret exercises of devotion to its outward display.

Look not then with desponding feelings upon those who honestly differ from you in belief, nor think that there may not be saving qualities of mind and heart without the circle you narrow around you. God maketh us to differ. The same subject presents itself to different minds under different aspects, and gives rise to different mental associations which influence the judgment.

Remember that there is no standard, by which to test the importance and truth of christian principles and doctrines, but the scriptures themselves, and that to this standard all equally appeal. Reflect also that others differ from you in religious opinion not more than

you differ from them; and let the consciousness of the purity of your own intentions, of your own sincerity, of your own love of God and truth and goodness, teach you to judge favorably and with candor of others. He whom thou numberest with unbelievers may be among the loved disciples of the Saviour. Beneath that cold exterior, under that outward appearance of indifference towards the cause and interests of religion, may be the warm gushings of devotional feelings and affections. Christian faith and hope and charity may dwell in the mind and heart, and the spirit of God descend and rest upon the head of him whom thou in thy weakness and ignorance believest to be far, far from the kingdom of heaven.

I have thus spoken of some of the causes of the erroneous judgment which we often pass upon the spiritual state and character of the individual and of society. The remarks which have fallen from me have been made not in a spirit of pride, not to prove that mankind are virtuous and good above what is written, but merely to show, that if we judge of the characters of others from loose and partial views of them, we shall be liable to err with the prophet of old.

We do not honor God, my friends, by making unjust representations of human nature, by considering this world as a soil in which no virtuous principle ever takes root; nor do we practise that christian charity which hopeth all things, when we judge others with an unreasonable and criminal severity. We may not indeed be insensible to prevailing error and depravity; but neither may we magnify the amount of moral evil that really exists. We should mourn over the moral desolation that spreads itself around us; but we should mourn and weep

not as those who have no hope. Doubtless, as we look upon the moral and religious state of the world, we find much to dishearten and dismay; but let us remember that thus did the state and condition of the Israelites affect the servant of God, as he beheld the worshippers of Baal and saw the smoke of their incense ascend from their altars of superstition and error. 'They have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, slain thy prophets with the sword, and I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away.' But what said the voice from heaven. No. Thou art not left alone. Beneath this appearance of universal idolatry may be found many a sincere worshipper of the true God. Among this people, who seem all to be devoted to the works of their own hands, there are thousands who have never bowed the knee to Baal, thousands of mouths that have not kissed him. There is still left among the children of Israel seven thousand who have not wandered from their God.

My friends, may not this be true in respect to the present state and past state of the world? Amidst all the worldly mindedness of men, amidst all the vice and immorality and corruption of mankind, may there not be countless multitudes whose hearts are right in the sight of God? And while we are murmuring and complaining that we only are left, may there not be an innumerable company of pious and holy men, walking like ourselves in the strait and narrow path of life, and seeking with us an inheritance beyond the grave, a crown of glory that fadeth not away?

D.S. V.3
1833

SERMON XI.

BY REV. CONVERS FRANCIS, OF WATERTOWN.

GRACE, AS CONNECTED WITH SALVATION.*

EPHESIANS II. 8. 'FOR BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED, THROUGH FAITH: AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES,—IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD.'

Every one, who reads the New Testament, must observe how frequently the word *grace* is used in connexion with Christianity, and the means of salvation. It is repeated on almost every page of the Epistles especially, as if with emphasis and distinction. Thus the gospel is called 'the grace of God which bringeth salvation;' 'the word of his grace which is able to build us up &c.;' and in the text Paul tells his converts 'by grace ye are saved through faith.' Similar passages are exceedingly numerous. And the word is abundantly used in conversation and in religious writings; though it must be allowed by every attentive observer, it is used for the most part very indefinitely. Men speak of grace in a vague way, without consideration or being able perhaps to tell precisely what they mean by it. It is regarded as one of those good words, which excite religious feelings, rather than express any idea which can be stated and explained. You perceive at once, therefore, the importance of endeavoring to acquire

* Preached at the Installation of Rev. Rufus A. Johnson, in Grafton, Oct. 16th, 1833.

plain, definite, and settled views on this subject. I shall accordingly attempt to set forth the true and scriptural meaning of grace, and of salvation by grace. In connexion with the occasion which has now brought us together, this subject must be regarded as peculiarly important. We are about to consecrate a Christian brother to the solemn duties of the ministry among you; and we are persuaded, it will be his constant study, his earnest endeavor, to unfold to you the truths of God's grace. When such a connexion is to be formed and sanctioned, the topic to which I have directed your thoughts must, I am sure, present itself to your minds as one of deep and appropriate interest.

I begin, then, with observing that the direct, exact, real meaning of the word which is translated *grace* in our Bible, is *favor*, *mercy*, *goodness*, or *kindness*. Thus the grace of God, is the favor of God, the goodness of God, or the kindness of God. And wherever the word grace occurs in the Sacred Writings, it is uniformly used in one form or another of this signification. Few, I think, who have the requisite knowledge of language, will deny this. Here then is the plain, simple, radical meaning of grace: it is mercy, kindness, favor, manifested in some way or other, through some medium or other. It is the more necessary and important to dwell upon and remember this simple, primitive meaning of the word we are considering, because the word has in the course of time come to have a *theological* meaning sometimes very different from that in which it is used in the New Testament. Most people, when they speak or read of grace, understand by it a sort of special, supernatural infusion or communication of a divine virtue or ef-

ficacy; at least, they have some confused notion of this kind, though they may not be able to tell exactly what it is. The framers of theological systems have taken the word out of its plain and intelligible use in the New Testament, and by putting it in a certain place among their doctrines and connecting it on every side with them, have given it a strange and perplexing aspect, which of itself it would never have taken. Hence we are apt to regard it as a sort of technical term of doctrinal religion; and when we hear or read it, we think at once of dark and subtle disputes about mysterious influences and communications, of which we can gain no clear conception, or at least none such as seems consistent with the plain dictates of reason and the Scriptures. It is unfortunate that words in themselves significant of a just and even beautiful sense, should thus be soiled and injured by association with what is unmeaning or irrational. The true signification of the term in question is far wider and more extensive, than we are apt to suppose. It is not bound up within the limits of controversial divinity, nor should it be exiled from the language of good sense to the foggy regions of dark speculation.

It is lamentable that men should be imposed upon by mere phrases, and thus be led either to abandon or pervert the simplicity of the Gospel. Remember, that when the word grace is used in the Scriptures, it is just the same, as if the word *favor*, or *kindness*, or some similar word, had been used. By bearing this in mind, you will avoid a good deal of confusion, and many mistakes.

I have made this explanation, because I take it for granted, that when men use words, they want to use

them in some intelligible meaning. Going on therefore with this plain and Gospel signification of grace, I proceed to consider it in its applications more at large.

Grace is the kindness of God, and this kindness is manifested in giving us the means of everlasting salvation. So too, it is manifested in a great many other forms, though in none so impressively, with such affecting power as in this, because none other of its objects is so important, so high, so far reaching, as this. Grace is shown forth in all the forms, in which God's goodness appears to us. Count over the long list of blessings, which the kindness of our Heavenly Father has bestowed upon man, and you will find these, each and all, to be so many instances of Divine grace. It was mercy or kindness, that constructed and furnished this beautiful system of nature, in the midst of which we dwell, that which kindled up the glorious orb of day to send his light and warmth to 'the family of worlds' which are ever travelling around him, that hung our earth in the system, balanced it in its place, and rolled it on its course, and that peopled the countless array of worlds with intelligent and immortal beings. It was mercy which gave man all the beauties and blessings of the changing seasons of the year, which pours out on the lap of earth the glories of spring and the abundance of harvest, which blesseth the springing of the flowers and fruits, and filleth our hearts with food and gladness. It was mercy, which breathed into man the breath of life, which gave him the wonderful and useful structure of his body, adapted in its parts and functions to so many purposes of enjoyment and utility, and which fitted him so wisely and happily for that sphere in creation, in

which he was destined to move. It was grace, which conferred on us the mental and moral powers of the soul,—that part of us which alone is immortal and can never die,—the image of God within us,—the faculties by which we are enabled to range in that path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen, to trace the chain of causes and effects up to the throne of the Eternal, and to contemplate the perfections of the Eternal himself. It was grace, or kindness, which created us social beings for the good and happiness of each other, and which causes us to act and react on one another by mutual sympathy, mutual relief, mutual enjoyment, and mutual influence. It is grace, or favor, which has blessed our race with all the means of mental and moral improvement, means by which light, and knowledge, and advancement have been transmitted from one generation to another, and which have carried forward continually the landmarks of refinement and happiness. It is grace, or mercy, which has raised up benefactors for our race,—men who stand as sons of light along the track of the past,—and whose labors and services have been the property and the privilege of the world.—It was grace which made man capable of religion, and bestowed upon him religious instruction,—which accommodated these instructions, from age to age, to his capacities and wants, opening the sublimity and spirituality of divine things gradually, as mankind advanced from childhood to maturity. And finally it was grace, which, after having led the human mind through the imperfect training of the Jewish dispensation, by the teaching of the wise, and holy, and gifted prophets and legislators of ancient times, disclosed the fulness of its mercy in the revela-

tions of Christianity, in what Jesus did, and taught, and suffered for the everlasting benefit of our race; in all that system of the blessed and mighty truths of salvation which is wrapped up in the gospel; in all the hopes, and fears, and solemn retributions which it arrays before us; and it is the same grace, which has transmitted the imperishable blessings of Christianity along the generations of men ever since, which brought us forth and permits us to dwell under its beams, and is spreading its holy light far and wide into those places over which moral darkness has for ages settled. All these things, which I have enumerated, are so many manifestations of grace, because they are manifestations of the mercy and kindness of God. From all these a voice proceeds, more or less affecting, sometimes in louder, sometimes in softer tones, but in all the same voice, proclaiming the grace of our Heavenly Father. How animating and sublime is this broad and generous view of the subject. Instead of narrowing the grace of God to a single point, we thus make it commensurate with the vast extent of all His mighty and beneficent works. It is not shut up and confined within this or that province, nor limited to this or that spot; it is abroad through the universe; it rides upon the clouds of heaven, and flies on the wings of the wind; it glows in every sun and every star, and rolls in every stream; it is stamped on the volume of nature, and the more glorious volume of revelation; it writes its evidences upon our hearts and consciences, upon the mental and moral faculties of man, upon his spiritual nature, and his everlasting hopes. Wherever the mercy of God appears,—in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, in the provisions which He

hath made for our well being in this world, and in the future world,—in all the wonders which His love hath wrought for our preservation, improvement, and happiness,—there appears the grace of God,—by which I mean, according to the true signification of the word, there appears his favor, his kindness, his goodness.

Such, then, is the import, and such the explanation of grace, taken in its general and widest sense. But in the text, the Apostle considers it solely in one of its forms and applications, viz. as it is exhibited in the means of salvation provided by Christianity. 'By grace ye are saved through faith,' i. e. through Christianity,—*faith* being used here, as in many other passages of the New Testament, to express the moral power supplied by the Gospel, —all those means of salvation, which are afforded by the Christian religion. The favor, or kindness of God, as manifested in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is therefore that one among the many forms of divine grace, which the Apostle was led by his subject to consider and speak of;—and by this favor, or kindness, as set forth and offered in Christianity, he asserts, we are saved. Here then is a particular branch of the general subject of grace, which must for the remainder of the discourse occupy our thoughts.

First, I will ask, what is meant by salvation? It is one of those words, which, though in the mouth of every one, are used in a very shadowy and indistinct manner. The Christian Scriptures speak of the future rewards of the good in the highest strains of figurative language. This language is by most people taken literally, and consequently being saved is supposed to mean being exalted to a certain state of outward glory, which is little better than

a vain show, or to a condition of perfect rest, which is nothing else than eternal indolence. But this is far from being a spiritual view of the subject. Salvation is elevated moral happiness. It is a word which expresses, not a condition of external glory, but a state of the mind and heart, that state which makes us ripe for pure moral felicity. It has no relation to outward pomp, or show, or rank, nor does it consist in white robes, or in songs, or idleness. It is that condition of happiness, which results naturally and necessarily from holiness and goodness of heart. It must signify a work done within the human soul,—not a work done out of it. It is not what is transacted *for* man by an apparatus of instruments and influences, with which he has no voluntary connexion, but what comes to pass *in* man as a moral agent, and is effected by the amendment of the heart, and the purification of the whole spiritual nature. It is very common to speak of the process, by which we are saved, as a process external to us,—as that which God has appointed to be performed and to be gone through on our behalf; and this way of speaking leaves the impression that we are the beings *concerning* whom the work is to be done, not the beings *in* whom it is to be done,—an impression which, I am persuaded, has been the source of a great many unhappy mistakes in our apprehensions of the nature and duties of religion. And according to the view of the subject I have now given, the *evil* from which we are to be saved is also wholly within ourselves. Salvation does not mean the rescue of man from the wrath of God: it means the rescue of man from sin and from the wretchedness consequent upon sin. The danger from which it sets us free, is,

the danger that springs from ourselves, from the corruption of our own hearts, from our bad passions, from folly, and from vice,—not from the vengeance of an offended Deity. Hence it is that the means of salvation are represented in Scripture as proceeding from the *love* of God towards man. He who hath created us ever looks on us with mercy, and in the spirit of mercy would rescue us from moral ruin. We have no enemy in Him. The enemy is in our own bosoms, and we need to be saved, not from the anger of the Almighty, but from ourselves. It is finely said by a pious and excellent writer—'He who hath attained the Christian virtues and graces needs not desire to pry into the hidden rolls of God's decrees, or search the volumes of heaven, to know what is determined about his everlasting condition; but he may find a copy of God's thoughts concerning him written in his own breast.'*

When therefore, the Apostle affirms that 'by grace we are saved,' he means that by grace we are advanced to spiritual improvement and spiritual purity. And this is done by the favor of God as displayed in the religion of Jesus Christ—How Christianity effects this purpose is the next inquiry.

The Christian faith, then, prepares us for salvation by its perfect adaptation to purify and sanctify our spiritual nature. It is the effectual moral medicine for a diseased world. It meets the great moral wants of man, which were never met before. It is, in short, the constituted method appointed by God to educate us for heaven.

1. The Gospel addresses man as a sinner. That he

* Scougal's Works, p. 12.

is a sinner, I need not prove: that is done to my hand by the testimony of every one's conscience. Christianity assumes this for a fact, and then provides for us a method to escape from the dominion, as well as the punishment of sin. It arrays before us the consequences of iniquity, both in this life and in the life to come. It tells us of that long and black train of evils, which come sweeping, like foul fiends and spectres, in its train, pursuing their wretched victim to the grave,—nor ceasing to pursue him there, but going with him to the unseen world, hanging upon his spirit as messengers of woe and ministers of a righteous retribution. God says to us by the laws of his natural government—'if you take poison into your body, it will vitiate your system and bring on anguish and death.' And He says to us just as clearly by the laws of his moral government,—'if you take sin to your bosom, it will vitiate your soul, and bring on moral misery and ruin.' This great truth, the Gospel holds up in all its impressive reality, and presses home upon us with all the weight of its solemn sanctions. When we are tempted to enter into the service of sin, when it holds out fair promises, and invites us into the ways of the transgressor,—then our religion bids us remember the *wages*, yes the wages, which are death, the degradation and corruption of the spiritual powers, a moral nature unfitted for happiness, and requiring a course of discipline, punishment and suffering—how long no one can tell,—to bring it into a capacity for enjoyment and improvement. These are the stipend of sin; these are the wages which it pays for the work of iniquity. And this is the high moral meaning of the awful warnings, the fearful threatenings, of the Gospel,—

warnings and threatenings, uttered in the true spirit of that grace or kindness, which has regard to our highest, even our everlasting welfare. When we realize, in all its length and breadth, this one great truth,—that the necessary consequence of moral depravity is the wretchedness of our whole moral being, from which we may even never recover,—our minds must be far more deeply and solemnly affected by it, than they can be by all the flaming descriptions of divine vengeance, all the dark or fiery pictures of the infernal regions, which the strong passions or the heated imaginations of men have ever devised. This great truth, Christianity in mercy sets forth in all its plainness and solemnity before our eyes. When the awakened sinner shrinks appalled from this prospect, and exclaims what shall I do to escape it?—the grace of the Gospel presents to him the balm of 'repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' It repeats to him the beautiful story of the prodigal son, who, when he returned with a heart subdued by the sorrows of contrition, and said 'Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee,' was taken to the arms of his father's love. The Gospel points him to the mediation of the Saviour, of him who 'came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many;' and through that directs him to seek for the mercy of God; for Jesus hath assured him that his sins, though many, shall be forgiven, upon sincere repentance and hearty reformation. 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' 'We have seen and do testify,' says the beloved Apostle, 'that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.'

2. The Christian faith addresses itself to man as a being of weakness and frailty, and gives him strength such as nothing else can give, and support such as the world cannot bestow. We live amidst temptations and trials; calamities assail us on every side; our purposes are broken off, our hopes frustrated, our designs defeated. Where shall we look for protection and comfort? Where shall we find the friend in time of need? The Gospel answers us. It is itself such a friend: it undertakes to supply, and does supply, the protection and comfort for which we anxiously search. What other religion ever satisfied this want? What other religion ever clothed its followers in the whole armor of God? None but the Gospel. Surely, then, it is the grace of God.

The true disciple of Jesus is borne up by a spirit, that carries him beyond the stinted and narrow bounds, to which other men confine their thoughts; and therefore he has a peace which man did not give, and which man can not take away. His soul is not dwarfed into littleness by thinking of nothing and caring for nothing but earthly relations and earthly concerns. He remembers that a vast expanse of spiritual growth is before him in the connexions of mortal man with the Eternal God; and the presence of the Everlasting Father overshadows his moral being, like the broad arch of heaven above us. He feels that a great reality is affirmed, when it is said that God has made us for himself,—and that we do wrong—shameful wrong—to our souls, when we wander away from Him at the call of folly or sin. And though his fellow men should rise

up in mockery against his faith, it shakes not his peace; for his testimony is within,—his heart tells him that his confidence is true, and the grace of God echoes back the assurance of his heart.

3. The faith of Jesus speaks to man as an immortal being. This is its highest and most glorious prerogative. Its sanctions, promises, and hopes belong to eternity; it carries us forward to the time, when the brief business of life will be over, when we shall look back upon the things of time, and wonder that they could have so much and so long delighted and interested us. For that time it commands and helps us now to live, remembering that the fashion of this world passeth away, and that the things which are seen are temporal, while the things that are unseen are eternal. It is the crowning glory of Christianity, that it covers with its instructions that vast futurity, to which we are all advancing as by the steady rush of a swift stream, —that it leaves us not in doubt respecting that which eye hath not seen, and ear hath not heard,—and that if it do not unfold clearly the whole mystery of a future existence, yet it enables—indeed compels us—to see in the plainest manner the ties which reach over from this state of probation to what we shall be and what we shall have beyond the grave. It belongs to Christianity to have given, in this way, a new and high meaning, a far more joyous fullness to religious hope, than it ever had before. It calls its faithful followers to expectations, on which no blight can fall to wither their bloom, whose treasures no ravisher can come to despoil. The hope, which in the gospel glows and brightens forth beyond the things of time, never faileth. It has to do only

with imperishable objects; and not one of its promises, but runs on in its fulfilment with the course of the everlasting ages. Well therefore, is it said to be *full* of immortality; for it contains within itself the essential principles of eternal duration, and no seeds of decay or death are inclosed in its nature. When the objects, to which men have clung the most earnestly and fondly, shall have gone down to dust, and be as though they had never been, then shall Christian hope ascend on its upward course, and find its consummation in those realities, on which, in the journey of life, faith had fixed its bright and steadfast eye. And this hope we owe to him who was the resurrection and the life. Surely, then, 'grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'

This is but a glance at the elementary principles of that grace or favor, which God hath bestowed upon us in Christianity, and for which all our gratitude is but too feeble. It is the great instrument for renovating and purifying the spiritual nature of man. It brings a mighty power to bear upon us for reformation and improvement. It aims at the eternal happiness of man by qualifying him for that happiness. It is a gift from that God, who, as the Apostle expresses it, 'is rich in mercy,' an expression of the great love wherewith he hath loved mankind, even when they were dead in trespasses and sins. Justly then,—Oh, most justly,—is it designated by a word, which expresses the unmerited kindness of our Heavenly Father. Our conviction of this will be the deeper when we consider at what a time of moral darkness and gloom this kindness was bestowed,—a time, when God saw his children wandering from his truth into every path of error and corruption, and

when, if ever, a beam from the fountain of heavenly light was needed to illuminate and guide them. At that crisis, Christianity came, the messenger of God's mercy and truth to man. The world was in a condition peculiarly to need this dispensation of grace. Judaism, we know, had almost ceased to have any moral power. It had grown almost useless, and palsied (if I may so say) with age; for it was never meant for a lasting dispensation, but was an adaptation to local wants and existing circumstances, for the purpose of effecting specific objects,—destined to stand for a time as an introduction to something better, and then to pass away. In other parts of the world, the state of things was well expressed by Paul, when he said that 'their understandings were darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them.' Their history is an impressive proof how poor and low are the conception of divine things entertained by the mass of mankind, unless they are guided by a better light than their own minds can strike out. The great and everlasting foundations of morality and religion, which are laid in just and elevated views of the Deity and of man's relation to Him, were wanting. All the solemn and affecting sanctions, which are drawn from the justice and mercy of a righteous God, were to them strange and unknown things. Principles and motives were not rooted deep in the soil of eternal truth, and did not reach to heaven. What they had under the name of religion was of the earth, earthly,—serving to amuse the senses or play upon the fancy, but not to probe and purify the heart. In the whole range of their instructions, where was there any thing like that

one solemn sentence in Christianity—'so then every one of us must give account of himself to God?' A religion was wanted that should operate as an universal moral power on man, as such, wherever and whenever he should be found. And this was the time, when through the truths of the Gospel, God said to the moral world—'let there be light—and there was light.'

The grace of God is indeed every where; but here it is in its best glory. It is to be traced in all the works of His hands, and in every step of His providence; but in the Gospel the traces of it are deeper and brighter than in aught else. The mountain and the valley, the field and the flood, bear a beautiful and glorious testimony to it, but their testimony is not to be compared with the thrilling, the heart-touching testimony of Christianity. In other things, its object and its influence are temporary and inferior; in the Gospel they are everlasting and supreme, not to be compared in importance with any other objects or influence,—and therefore the grace of the Gospel is equally above that of other things. The religion of Jesus Christ is the great, the eternal grace of God,—because it is the manifestation of his great, his eternal love. By that religion God designs us to be saved, i. e., to be brought into that state of spiritual purity and excellence, which may prepare us for the happiness intended by the term salvation. Therefore, we are brought at once to the conclusion which the Apostle has expressed in the text, when he says 'by grace ye are saved through faith.'

Now what is the source of this salvation? This question brings us to the other part of the text—'and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.' No, it

is not of ourselves,—it is all of God,—all from his free, unmerited gift, just as every thing else we have, or can have, is. Can you tell me what single thing we possess that is not either the immediate gift of the Almighty, or the direct consequence of his gifts? The gospel is the grace of God by which we are saved; and surely no one will say, that the gospel is from ourselves. It is an old, stale, and ought to be a worn-out charge, against those who are called Liberal Christians, that they depend on themselves for salvation, set aside the grace of God, and expect every thing from their own merits only. The charge is wholly and totally groundless, as every one, I think, must know, who has examined the subject deliberately and impartially. We maintain no such opinion. We say indeed that man can use the means of grace, or refuse to use them, that he can improve by them, so as to become wise unto salvation, or can harden himself against them, and shut out the mercies of God from his heart. The power of doing this must be allowed him, or else his moral agency must be destroyed, and he must be reduced to a mere passive machine. But still the means, which are offered to his acceptance, come from God solely, and not at all from his own merits,—any more than the provisions of nature, or his intellectual capacities, or the blessings of life come from his own merits. Take the case of a child, who from infancy is fed, clothed, and supported by the care, industry, foresight, and anxious love of a tender parent,—for whom all the means of education and improvement are provided with the affectionate solicitude of a good father,—to whom all the opportunities of becoming virtuous, useful, and happy

in manhood are afforded by the hand of devoted parental kindness. Would you say, that the child depended on his own merits for all these gifts, means and opportunities? Surely not; it would be the extreme of absurdity to say so. The child may be grateful for all the benefits thus bestowed, may use them with diligence and fidelity, and thus become good, wise, and happy; or he may be unthankful for them, cast away these privileges and blessings, and grow up in wickedness and wretchedness, and disgrace. Just so it is with man in respect to the grace of his Heavenly Father. That grace is bestowed upon him by God, and on God he is wholly dependent for it. He did nothing, and could do nothing, to procure it for himself, any more than he could create himself such as he is, or could create the wonderful system of nature around him. It is all from the free, undeserved kindness of God. Still it is in the power of man to accept or refuse this grace,—to be made good and happy by it here and hereafter, or to throw it from him and go on in the downward course of depravity and darkness to moral ruin. It appears therefore that there is a perfect harmony between the fact, that man is a free moral agent, and the declaration of the Apostle, that 'it is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God.'

Thus it is with respect to the means of grace in this world. And so, too, the rewards of heaven are not the rewards of our desert; they are the rewards conferred by God's grace. The whole statement of this subject seems to me to be neither more nor less than this,—that we are saved when we become capable of salvation,—i. e. when we become good; and to say this, is

not saying that we have any reason to ascribe salvation to our own merits, any more than it is to say, that the farmer has reason to ascribe the produce of the grain to his own merits, when he finds that which he reaps to be of precisely the same nature with that which he sows. The two cases are perfectly parallel. 'As you sow, so also you will reap,' is just as true in the spiritual world, as in the natural world,—just as true with regard to the soul of man, as with regard to the soil of the earth. You cast your seeds into the ground, and you have a produce of the same kind: so you implant the principles and feelings of the Gospel in your heart, and Christian habits in your character, and the result will as inevitably be that state of spiritual happiness here and hereafter which is denominated salvation. And this salvation is the free gift of God, just as the harvest you gather from your fields is the free gift of God.

I have thus taken occasion from my text to explain to you what I conceive to be the true nature and meaning of grace and of salvation by grace. The sum of it is this; the grace of God is the favor, the kindness of God: this kindness, or grace is manifested in various ways, but most peculiarly and gloriously in the Gospel of Christ, or in the Christian religion. By the gospel the means of salvation, or, which is the same thing, the means of spiritual improvement and spiritual happiness are provided and pressed upon our acceptance:—therefore by grace, or favor, or kindness, we are saved,—not of ourselves, because it is the gift solely of our Heavenly Father. This, it seems to me, makes the subject very plain and simple, and strips it of that confused, mysterious, unintelligible character with

which it is too often invested in those systems, which by a strange misnomer claim for themselves the exclusive title of doctrines of grace. Grace thus appears to be not a special, irresistible, supernatural operation upon the mind, pointed specifically at an individual, coming upon him he knows not whence or how, effecting its work without his own exertions as a moral agent, and even whether he will or not;—this is not its character; but it is the mercy of the Most High supplying us with the means of salvation, revealing to us His will, and urging upon us with the love of a father, all those solemn, heart-searching motives, and sanctions, which are adapted to rouse us from spiritual lethargy, and to press upon our hearts the things which belong to our everlasting peace. What I have said is, I conceive, the simple doctrine of the Scriptures on the subject; whether it agree with the systems and schemes, which men have constructed in modern times, it is of little importance to inquire.

When we are told that God has seen fit, by the exercise of a free and arbitrary grace, to save certain individuals of mankind from the general ruin, while all others are left to hopeless perdition, that every good thought and purpose even in those, who are called the elect, is immediately inspired by God, and that without this continual assistance which is called grace, no man has any choice but of evil from the moment of his birth to his death,—when, I say, we are told, that such is the doctrine of Christianity, we may well ask, what is there in the just interpretation of Scripture, what is there in the plain dictates of reason, to countenance for a moment such a statement? The boasted

recommendation of these views is, that they humble man and make him feel as he ought his entire dependence on God. But when we ascribe solely to the goodness of God all the powers by which we are enabled to do any thing, all the means, opportunities, and assistances, by which the spiritual life is formed and strengthened within us, what broader and stronger foundation for humility and for the sense of absolute dependence on God can we have? Or how can we more effectually declare that 'it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure?' On this, as on other religious subjects, there has been a constant tendency to excess on one side or the other. Thus the Church of Rome, in the progress of accumulating corruptions, came at length to believe and to teach, that the saints not only had merit enough for their own salvation, but that they were able to lay up a superabundant treasure of merit over and above what was necessary for themselves, that these works of supererogation might be transferred to the account of others, and thus salvation be bought and sold. This monstrous abuse was the immediate cause of awakening the spirit of the Reformation. But the reformers, in the reaction of their zeal, by a very common process of the human mind, swung at once to the opposite extreme. The doctrines of absolute predestination, of irresistible grace and of human impotence were never carried further, than by Luther. He would allow man no agency in the work of his salvation, considered him as a passive subject of arbitrary influences, and some of his adherents even counted all good works to be only more splendid forms of sin. Thus it is that in the heat of

party feeling men proceed from one extravagance to another, and seem to leave out of their account the nature of man and the moral government of the Almighty. We should never forget that the grace of God is a gift, a free, unmerited gift; but at the same time a gift which does nothing for us, except so far as it stimulates and aids us in that spiritual improvement, by which we may become wise unto salvation.

And now, my hearers, having finished my explanation of this subject, let me entreat you, in the words of Scripture, 'that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.' A great deal is done for us: but forget not, I beseech you, there is a great deal for us to do. It is love, pure, Almighty love, which has created us immortal beings, and offered to our acceptance the blessings of sanctification and redemption. Shall we sin against this love, and live as if nothing had been done for us more than for the brutes that perish? When you look at the thing aright, it is surely sad to think that what Heaven condescends to bestow, man should have the heart to neglect or despise,—that (to use a bold figure of Eastern imagery) God should bow his heavens and come down to us with the proffers of mercy, and yet that we should turn away and give our hearts to the poor things of time and sense, or wait at least for a convenient season to receive the goodness of our Heavenly Father. Let us not, my friends, thus set at defiance every provision which Infinite Mercy has made for our everlasting well-being, and at last go down to the dust, refusing the hope full of immortality. Let it not be so, I beseech you,—let it not be so. Rather be it our

heart's desire, and prayer, and our earnest endeavor, to be enrolled among those, upon whom, 'in the ages to come hereafter God may shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, by Jesus Christ.'

The considerations that have been presented may lead us, in connexion with this occasion, to some just conceptions of the nature of that office which the Christian minister is called to sustain. He is an agent, and should be a devoted and efficient one, in the great system of moral influences established by God. It is a noble and encouraging thought, that so far as he gives himself to the work of diffusing the spirit and power of religion, he co-operates with his Master in the fulfilment of that design, which came forth from the Infinite Mind. He, who gives even one sacred truth a deeper and surer hold on the minds of men, so that it may be realized and acted upon in all its greatness, he who binds to the heart, by ties not to be severed, the precious treasure of an everlasting hope, he who exemplifies and enforces a duty bearing upon immortality—and every duty, even the humblest, has this bearing,—he who strengthens the foundation, on which religion rests, as the guardian of the blessings of the community, he is a minister of the grace of God to his fellow-men, and he exerts an influence, the great significance of which will be revealing itself through eternity. And such are the results which may be expected from those who dispense with earnest fidelity the enlightening and rational truth of Jesus. They will not feed their hearers with the husks of useless or amusing speculations, instead of the bread of life; they will not be seduced from the work of doing good by the

idle ambition of vain applause. The Christian minister, who knows the worth of the pure and sanctifying truths of the Gospel, will feel that he is entrusted with 'the word of God which liveth and abideth forever,' that word, which is the spirit of knowledge to the ignorant, the spirit of truth to those who are perplexed with doubts and difficulties, and the spirit of holiness to those who are polluted with sin. He will seek mainly to administer the influences, by which religion becomes a regenerating power, which, when grief chills the heart, come to warm and expand it, when darkness overclouds the mind, come to shed abroad the day-spring from on high, and when the world is desolate and barren, are seen pointing out to the eye of faith a bright and beautiful path through the wilderness to the Paradise of God.

SERMON XII.

BY REV. JAMES FLINT, D. D. SALEM.

HAPPINESS AT HOME. A THANKSGIVING SERMON.

PSALM CXXII. 7. PEACE BE WITHIN THY WALLS.

It is a great folly or mistake of mankind, that they let their happiness depend on things remote and foreign from their persons,—foreign from the spot they occupy, in which the real goods or ills of life must chiefly centre. They are vainly prone to diffuse themselves, if I may so express it, over an extended surface,—to feel or fancy themselves interested, in what perhaps in no wise pertains to them,—to rejoice or grieve at events and circumstances, which cannot affect either their persons, their friends, their interests or any of the essential and enduring sources of their happiness. It is folly to suspend our happiness upon the doings of distant nations, the public debates, the contests of parties, or the final enactments of government in our own. Our solicitude about these things, over which we have just about the same control, that we have over the tides and the weather, is certainly to very little purpose, and in general is but a useless vanity and self-inflicted vexation of spirit.

'How small of all that human hearts endure,
That part, which laws or kings can cause or cure.
Still to ourselves in every place consigned,
Our own felicity we make or find;
With secret course, which no loud storms annoy,
Glides the smooth current of domestic joy.'

Not, indeed, that I would discourage, or be thought to undervalue a generous sympathy for the oppressed or suffering of all nations; and far less would I wish to repress those patriotic feelings, which should be always alive and awake in the citizen, when the liberty, honor or common weal of his country is in jeopardy from any quarter. My meaning is, that it is unwise to be so deeply interested in affairs that we cannot regulate, or so occupied with things abroad, remote or above us, with future and contingent events, or so eager in the pursuit of what is not essential to our happiness, as to overlook, or forget, or disqualify ourselves for enjoying, those numerous private and invaluable blessings, which are more immediately within our reach; such as the obvious and perennial satisfactions and cordial comforts, which all may find, if they will, within the precincts of their own dwelling.

And here, again, it is our folly or misfortune to disregard or underrate our truest goods and most essential means of happiness. Naturally aspiring and proud, and ungrateful for the common bounties and blessings of Providence, we covet for ourselves great things, and scheme and toil after the glare of wealth and the means of ostentation and display, while the simple and innocent satisfactions of nature, because cheap and within the reach of all, are neglected or despised. We accustom ourselves to look at the deceitful show of life,—

the external glitter, the dazzling mockery of great riches and grandeur, without considering how little these things in themselves can contribute to the real enjoyment of their possessors. We are apt to fancy, that there can be nothing wanting to complete the happiness of those, who live in palaces, who are clothed in fine raiment, and fare sumptuously every day, while we pity the inhabitant of the plain and humble dwelling, that betokens the absence of every thing like fashion, superfluous wealth, elegant leisure and the vain show of pride, from which, more probably than from the princely mansion, every day ascends 'that incense sweet,' that reaches heaven, the incense of peaceful, contented and grateful minds.

Thankful witnesses and partakers of the prosperous condition of the Commonwealth and the nation,—having honestly discharged our duty, as freemen in the exercise of our elective franchise, by committing the administration of our public affairs to the willing hands, that are always so ready to bear this onerous burden for the love of us the people,—a propitious season also having ripened for us a bountiful harvest,—let us, leaving things remote and beyond our control, and passing by those elevated, cold and steril regions, where pride, and fashion, and rivalry, and perpetually new and ever-increasing artificial wants have taken up their fixed and settled abode,—let us search for happiness and motives of thankfulness in scenes more familiar, and of nearer interest and more homefelt concern to every one of us, —I mean in our own habitations. Let us look within the precincts of those dwellings, in which competence generally, and poverty rarely has found a place. And

for my brethren and companions' sake in the circle where my friends dwell, and where is the house of my God, I will now say, 'peace be within thy walls.'

What is it, that constitutes all, or well nigh all of earthly happiness, for which it is worth while for man to live? The sum of human bliss, of real heartfelt enjoyment is small, we know, at the best. It is not good for us to build tabernacles of rest in a strange country, which we must so soon leave, or to feel ourselves settled and at home in houses of clay; and therefore it is, that happiness is a tender and frail plant, of difficult culture, and easily blighted in this world, and can bloom and bear immortal fruit only in milder skies and brighter plains beyond the grave. Nevertheless, there is enjoyment even here, of a kind and degree, suited to cheer and gladden us, as we pass along through time,—to animate and refresh the soul with foretastes of that joyful and enduring 'rest, which remaineth for the people of God.'—What is this enjoyment, and where is it to be found? It is not in abundance of wealth, or eminence of station. Place and power and fame, as the possessors know, confer it not. Is it in chariots and horses, and equipage, and splendor and a palace, and luxurious viands, and couches of ivory, and the sound of the viol and the harp? No, —said he who had tried them all,—who had palaces and a crown, and vineyards and much gold, and manservants and maidservants,—and after the licentious customs of the age, a multitude of wives and concubines, singing men and singing women, and all the delights of the sons of men. But no, said he; I have tried all;— 'it is all vanity and vexation of spirit.'—It is not in any

of those circumstances of parade and show, for which so many sacrifice not only their best and truest comforts here, but the soul's title to blessedness hereafter. In what then does it consist? I answer, supposing there is health, and competence, and an upright mind, it consists in that assemblage of common and every-day circumstances, of which, like the surrounding air and light, we make no account, and for which millions, who possess them, forget to thank Heaven, and, disdaining to be happy in so cheap a way, leave them unenjoyed in the pursuit of things dear-bought and far fetched. We may sum it up in two words, domestic felicity;—in the sweet charities, that in all good hearts are called into exercise in the sacred and dear relations of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister.

Things strike us most when presented in a picture. Let the time, then, be a winter evening,—the scene be the country in the midst of a storm, when the falling columns of snow are rushing impetuously from the north,—when the careering winds, let loose from the polar regions, howl mournfully abroad, and sigh through every listed door and chasm that will admit their breath;—at a time like this, and in a scene so dreary and desolate and tumultuous without, let us look into the decent dwelling of the husbandman or mechanic whose circumstances are neither above nor below the golden mean of New England competence. However gloomily the storm may rage without, the fire blazes cheerfully within. Industry, with a prudent forethought, has collected and secured her various stores, and has not been sparing of her toils. There is enough and to spare laid up to gladden the hearts of the family group with

a sense of plenty and warmth within, in contrast with the cold sterility and desolation, that reign without. Indeed, all the light and genial warmth and comfort within are doubly enhanced by contrast with the cheerless and dismal aspect of things abroad. The father, whose nerves are braced with honest industry and toil, —whose robust frame and clear eye bear unequivocal marks of temperance and inward peace,—can look round, with a contented and glad heart, upon the smiling circle,—the wife of his youth, the mother of his children, engaged in useful occupation or innocent pastime,—with her children about her the while listening to the passing news from abroad, to an instructive book, or to the tale of other times, or to the narrative of the traveller, perhaps, of things and sights most marvellous and passing strange. He is sole monarch of this little blissful empire. All his subjects love him and love each other. Ambition has infused no storm into their tranquil bosoms. False pride or shame has never made them sigh for costly pleasures. Ill nature, scowling discontent, sour moroseness spoils not a single face in the whole group. They heed not the riot and uproar of the storm abroad. All is harmonious and peaceful within. The memory of years and events that are past, is recalled by the father, and his bosom dilates with joy as he recounts, while the countenances of his children brighten with the glow of patriotic sympathy as they listen to the history of the times that tried men's souls, of the heroic sacrifices and achievements of the asserters and defenders of our independence, of the battles they fought, the privations they endured, the virtues they displayed, that they might live and die free, and leave

their children to call their lands and their pleasant homes their own without a master. Behold the scene! It is the sole-surviving trace of paradise on earth, unspoiled by the perverted tastes and distempered cravings of artificial life, or the costly inventions of pride and luxury. And when, having duly invoked and thanked the Author of all their mercies, they retire to rest, it is as sweet, as tranquil and profound, as is the sleep of 'infants empty of all thought.' Who will not say, 'peace be within this house.' 'The secret of the Lord remain upon it;' and may he 'give his angels charge' to watch over it. And when its blameless and happy tenants are summoned away from this asylum of their purest joys, affections and virtues on earth, may it be to a tearless and deathless mansion in their Father's house in heaven.

Scenes like this, I know, were once common in New England. I trust they are still to be found. And it is surely no small cause for thankfulness, my friends, that you may all realize, if you will, the main outlines and most essential features in this picture. You may all expel the storms of winter, and the still more dreary storms of domestic strife and discord, and enjoy the simple pleasures, the united affection and peace of the domestic scene, which I have briefly attempted to sketch. And enjoying these innocent and heartfelt satisfactions, you need not envy the monarch his throne, the rich their splendor, nor the ambitious their standing in their high and slippery places of office, of political or literary celebrity.

Considering where all true and satisfying enjoyment must finally centre, it is astonishing how mistaken and

preposterous is the course, which so many pursue in search of happiness. There is no toil, nor hardship, nor vexation, which they will not endure for the sake of accumulating superfluous riches,—there is no peril, which they will not brave, no privation, which they will not undergo to meet the demands of fashion, to emulate or eclipse their neighbors in the expensive vanities of life. And yet all that these things can do for them, beyond the means of satisfying their reasonable wants and desires, is to foster pride, to feed an idle fancy, and for the most part, to increase care and trouble. But while in pursuit of these unnecessary acquisitions, they too often forget to cultivate gentle manners, affectionate dispositions, a kind and endearing deportment towards each other in the family circle, in which, I repeat, is to be found man's truest and best earthly happiness. A dove, as you read, was sent abroad by Noah to ascertain if the deluge had subsided from the mountains. All was still one wide expanse of waters. The affrighted bird found no rest for the sole of her foot, and fled home again to the ark. It is so with man. He may go abroad into this tumultuous world; he may rise up early, go late to rest, eat the bread of carefulness and be rich; he may gain popularity, acquire distinction, and be hailed as the man whom the people delight to honor. He may visit foreign climes,—may traverse, in search of wealth, of pleasure or knowledge, through every part of the globe. But he will everywhere find the world a vain show, and mankind disquieting themselves in vain. He will still be travelling over a wintery waste amidst cold and selfish hearts. In order to find a resting place for the heart

and to be happy, he must return to the domestic circle. He must have an ark, to which, like the dove, he can fly from the stormy and boisterous waste, and find an affectionate welcome, a quiet asylum, where there is community of interests, a mutual willingness to receive and confer and appreciate kind offices, and to reciprocate all the tokens and demonstrations of unreserved confidence and love. Yes,—if there be any unmingled portion of good for man on this side of heaven, you must find it here. How many of our best feelings,—how delightful the affections, how sweet the charities, that are called into exercise within the precincts of the family circle. How inexpressibly soothing and grateful to the vexed and wearied spirit, to have one refuge to flee to, where you can repose perfect confidence in all the inmates, whose destinies are so interwoven with yours that consulting your interest and comfort is consulting their own! How pleasant to be able to unbosom yourself,—to have none of that odious restraint, which mutual suspicion and distrust have contrived to render necessary in the heartless and hollow intercourse of the world.

While then I would, at this close of the year, with the return of the season that brings the household together around the fireside, call forth your gratitude, that the truest and best of earthly joys are within your reach, I would, at the same time, remind you how they are to be obtained and preserved, as well as appreciated.

The Psalmist prays for his city that peace may be within its walls. And this comprises the sum of all that I would say. It is at once the cause and the consequence of domestic felicity. To have peace within the

domestic circle, there must be a due and deep-felt sense of its indispensable necessity, a just apprehension of the evils that result from its interruption, and a corresponding vigilance and care to preserve it inviolate. There must be a certain gentleness of manners, an amenity of spirit,—an equanimity and steadiness of self-control and self-sacrifice, an open, confiding, conciliatory deportment, a disposition—to use the common phrase—to make the best of every thing, a cordial participation in each other's joys, and sympathy in each other's cares and sufferings;—above all, a kind willingness to bear with each other's infirmities and defects. Each, though it may be in very different degrees, will often need this last proof of christian forbearance and love.

Little need be said, I am sure, to prove the indispensable necessity of this peace. Every thing in this world, in the same proportion that it is subservient to happiness, when rightly improved, becomes, in a like degree, the cause of misery, when misused or perverted. And, as the domestic retreat is the only asylum where you may expect to find, as I have said, the chief, almost the only satisfying portion of good allotted to man on earth; so, if it be a region of storm and broil and jargon, of ill nature, distrust and jealousy, it is—earth affords me no image of resemblance; you must seek for it in those abodes of misery and horror, prepared for the devil and his angels. O how wretched, above all names of wretchedness, is that man, who, returning from the selfish and chilling intercourse of a cold and stormy world abroad, retires to a home of storm, or of icy and wintery looks, as much worse than all he had to encounter from the bitter rivalry and

clashing interests and conflicting passions of men from without, as the horrors of civil war are more dreadful than the hostile assaults of a foreign foe. What a scene is that, where no looks expressive of satisfaction, content and mutual affection, are reflected from face to face, but where aversion, or sullenness, or discontent scowls in every countenance,—where mutual reproach and recrimination form the only language, that must soothe the wounded spirit, and wear away the tedious storms of winter. What a deplorable spectacle, how full of wo, where the several members of a family are seen rising up one against another, husband and wife and parent and child at variance. It is the last calamity, when a man's foes are those of his own household. The spirit of a man may sustain his bodily infirmities, but a spirit thus wounded who can bear? No wonder the tavern, or dramshop, or a worse resort is sought as a refuge from such a home.

But let us turn away from a scene so melancholy, which throws a gloom over the mind, which is not congenial with the spirit and duties of the day. That individual does not deserve the title of husband or wife, parent or child, that does not strive to leave all discontent and moroseness, all unkindness and harshness and petulance without the sanctuary of the domestic retreat, —that does not make it a matter of conscience to carry thither all that forbearance and tenderness, confidence and love, which the sacred and endearing affinities of nature, and the holy charities of home are fitted to inspire,—that is not careful to avoid all occasions of giving or taking offence,—of indulging or provoking feelings of bitterness. How baneful and unfortunate

for children to be reared amidst strife and contention; to have their first feelings, their first sensations attuned to altercation and discord! On the contrary, mutual kindness, affection and concord have the happiest effect upon the rising members of a family, who live thus united and endeared to each other. It sweetens, as I may say, the first rudiments of their temper, dispositions and character. When one of such a family suffers, every member suffers with it; when one is made glad by a more than ordinary pleasure, all participate in it.

'The day glides sweetly o'er their heads
Made up of innocence and love.'

What cause for grief, that ever wedded companions, parents, children, brethren, sisters, should make or find the asylum of home, 'sweet home,' a different scene from this? Even the brute creation should teach us better. Observe the care and tenderness of the birds of the air for each other and for their young; while the one, with maternal solicitude, shelters her brood from the chilling winds and rain with her extended wings, the other sits by to watch and lighten her cares with his song, or is busied in search of food. How quiet and tranquil repose together the young in the same nest. Even the offspring of the lion and the tiger are at peace in their dens. And is it for husband and wife, pledged to each other by the vows of affection, bound to each other by the most tender and sacred of all ties, —is it for brother and sister, partaking the same flesh and blood, to rise up against each other and exhibit the spirit of furies? Be ever on your guard, then, and strive and watch and pray, that *peace may be within your walls.* Allow me to adopt the language of God to

Moses; when thou approachest thy fireside, that sacred asylum, 'put off thy shoes,'—throw aside illnature, moroseness, and every discordant feeling, for the place thou art approaching 'is holy ground.' Not that I would have you infer from this, that illnature is allowable any where, but that it is peculiarly offensive and misplaced in the family circle.

You are husband and wife. You have vowed to be kindly affectioned one towards the other; you have solemnly promised to attach yourselves with inviolable truth and tenderness to each other in all your fortunes, —to walk hand in hand, and with one heart and mind to share together the goods and ills of life. Be, therefore, love and peace within your walls. Ye are parents. How thankless, how unfeeling, how unnatural if ye are not at once kind to each other, and kind to the pledges of your mutual love. Ye are children. Will you, more savage than the young animals of the forest, contend with each other, provoking, annoying, envynig and hating one another? Ye are a family. How delightful to see the heads united and affectionate, calling your offspring at the opening morning and the close of evening, to worship in the presence of the God of life, —alleviating each other's cares, soothing each other's pains, reciprocating the sweet courtesies and enhancing a thousand fold the pleasures of existence,—helping each other to sustain the trials, and to accomplish the best and noblest ends of life;—the children dutiful and early wise, rocking the cradle of declining age, and smoothing your passage to the grave, in return for having trained them up, by precept and example, amidst the endearments, the peace, and the pure and rational plea-

sures of home, for a world, where love and concord and unmingled bliss shall reign in full perfection forever.

But in order to realize this happy picture of domestic life there must be, not only peace within our walls, but plenty; at least a sufficiency to meet the natural wants of a household, and to live in decent credit and comfort. It is a visionary and delusive idea, that can dwell only in a romantic or heated fancy, that there can be domestic love and peace in the midst of absolute want. Experience soon detects the fatal error. While we are in the body the wants of nature must be satisfied. And where children cry for bread, where poverty and hunger excite keener sensations than those of tenderness and affection, these gentle fires are soon damped and expire. There must, therefore, be a reasonable calculation for success in this point before the domestic relation can be formed with a reasonable prospect of happiness; and when it is formed, there must be industry and united purpose and concert in the exercise of economy. True, indeed, it was denounced in the form of a curse, that by the sweat of his brow man should obtain his bread. But, like the curses of a father in whose bosom forever dwell the springs of kindness and clemency, it was changed to a blessing. For, which is the happier man, —he who has nothing to do, and therefore does nothing; or he whose life is necessarily a life of daily returning activity and usefulness? There is an indescribable, heart-cheering sensation of self-approval inseparable from honest industry, with which the indolent and sauntering idler intermeddleth not. How can that man be weary of his labors, who is providing for the comfort of

that family, which embraces for him 'all that makes it life to live,'—in which are concentrated so many sacred ties and dear affections, so many delightful associations and hopes; and where the approving smiles and grateful love of all its members and the acknowledgment that they owe their happiness to him, shall be the certain reward of his toils? Be then industrious, that plenty as well as peace may be within thy walls. With industry are connected innumerable benefits,—exemption from evil passions and the influence of temptation, the pleasure of beholding the work of one's own hands, order and regularity, a cheerfulness that will go with you to the fireside, and, to crown the whole, that competence of good things, which will dispel from your dwelling one of the most fruitful sources of discontent, repining and reproach,—which will meet all the reasonable demands of your household for subsistence, education and a respectable standing in society,—which will give you a sense of comfort, a feeling of security against want, of defence and shelter from the congealing frosts and howling storms of winter.

With these outward blessings there must be united another in the heart,to crown and sanctify the whole,—I mean religion. There must be a sense of God, a pervading sentiment of piety,—a hope and growing preparation for heaven in a happy family. For, however tenderly you may be attached to each other, your mutual love, your strict and fond embraces cannot avail to keep you forever together. However cheerful and smiling and full of joy all may at present appear in your dwellings, the time will soon come, when, in the touch-

ing language of the poet,

> 'No more for you the blazing hearth will burn,
> Or busy housewife ply her evening care,
> No children run to lisp their sire's return,
> Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.'

Your dwelling will be left desolate, and your bodies laid in the grave to mingle with their parent dust. Yet do not suffer the mention of this inevitable event to throw a gloom over your enjoyments. And that it may not, accustom yourselves and your household habitually to contemplate and hope for a final remove from the earthly paradise of domestic peace and love, to a paradise above,—there to renew, perfect, and perpetuate all your virtuous affections and innocent attachments and pure delights in your Father's house and heavenly presence forever.

In presenting the simple and obvious considerations, that have been offered to your attention in this discourse, it has been my wish that, on this day more especially, your hearts might rise in thankful acknowledgments to Almighty God, that, by the bountiful harvests and the success with which he has crowned the honest labors and enterprise of all classes the past season, he has done all on his part to enable you to enjoy the rich blessings of domestic peace and comfort. In possession of the most ample and invaluable privileges,civil and sacred,—belonging to a free, enlightened, prosperous and well-regulated community, who is he, that can retire this day to a plentiful repast—to tranquillity and comfort in his dwelling,—to see the friends most dear to him about him,—to feel the glow and vigor of health in his frame, and not be thankful to the Lord of life and Giver of every good gift, for his enjoyments? Blessed with the

common affinities of nature, a quiet home, and food and raiment and warmth,—with a grateful heart, an approving conscience and contented mind, nothing is wanting of all that man can enjoy, to render your condition as happy as is good for mortals, who are heirs and expectants of a better country, even an heavenly,—and need therefore to be reminded by the imperfections and changes and sometimes painful discipline of the present state, that this is not the place of their rest. While then you behold the candle of the Lord, in the beautiful language of Scripture, shining upon your dwelling, and your children about you, and peace and plenty within your walls, let a deep-felt sense of the goodness of God penetrate your hearts and stir up all that is within you to praise and bless his holy name, not only today, but all your days. And I will still pray, as is my duty and my privilege, for the place where are my brethren and friends and the house of our God,—that your industry and enterprise may be crowned with increasing success and prosperity;—that you may find in your dwellings all the joys and heart-felt satisfactions, that bless the home of virtuous and affectionate families,—that here you may long enjoy all that mortals can innocently enjoy,—that you may finally go away to celebrate an everlasting thanksgiving, a perpetual jubilee, in the great community of the blessed in God's heavenly presence forever. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

BY REV. SIMEON DOGGETT, RAINHAM.

LOVE, THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW.

ROMANS XIII. 10.—LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW.

It is obvious, that the Apostle, in our text, designed to condense the two great commands of our blessed Lord, on which, he declared, hung all the law and the prophets. Love comprises three essential attributes—union or attachment, delight, and a reigning desire to please. The object of love is goodness, or moral excellence. In the perfect exercise of love, its attributes will be drawn into action, in proporton as goodness prevails and is realized in its object. There are various degrees of goodness, from the faintest spark of benevolence, up to the fountain of all moral excellence, where it exists without alloy, unlimited, and eternal. Hence where this heavenly principle reigns, God will be loved supremely, and his creatures in proportion as they bear his image. The correct exercise of this power is the great source of intellectual happiness. Habitually Contemplating the Divine character as displayed in his works and word, especially dwelling on his goodness and mercy

an increasing nearness and union to the God of love will be perceived, a calm and sweet delight will pervade the mind, and the reigning, prevailing desire will be to please God, by learning and doing his will.

It will be the object of our discussion, to extend our views of the power of this principle of universal obedience, both as it respects the internal man, and his external duties and conduct. This will naturally bring us to the near and all-important relation about to be consummated.*

First, of the internal man.

The attributes of God are conspicuously displayed in his works. Every object and work of his hand carries a display of his goodness, wisdom and power. The more extensive and deep our researches into the Creator's works, the more we shall see, and be constrained to admire and adore his transcendent attributes. In the infinite variety of the works of God, none more obviously show his hand, than the perfect adjustment of means to ends. While this opens a wide field of delightful speculation I shall pass it by, adverting only to the moral condition of man. The word of life teaches that the chief end, the grand destination of human probation, is, that under the aids of the Divine mind, man while here, should clothe himself in the shining robes of righeousness, that beyond the grave, a crown of immortality may be placed upon his head. For this great work and high glory, the faithful Creator hath endowed him with a variety of powers most happily adjusted. God hath given him understanding and reason to see and inculcate

* Preached at the ordination of Rev. Theophilus P. Doggett of Bridgewater, Nov. 18, 1833.

truth and duty; a conscience always alive to enforce, with pleasure or remorse, the dictates of reason; a will, or sovereign power to determine his own actions; a memory to deposite truths, the rules of duty and results of experience; imagination, appetites, and the primary original passions, love and hatred, the exciting powers, to serve as the gales of life. These powers are continued in exercise by the hand that created them, and all so assisted by a concurring divine influence, as to secure to man a sphere of independant action, in which his motions are uncoerced, free, and accountable.

Thus aided and endowed, God hath placed us here in his probationary school, where all our powers are to be brought into their proper action, to gain the high destination of our make,—holiness, and angelic happiness. Excited and directed as God and nature designed, so wise and benevolent is their adjustment, the result is sure and certain. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Let God be loved and regarded supremely, and all will go right within. Reason and understanding, with animated exertion, will be all engagement to learn the will of God—the law and rule of duty to the intellectual universe. The conscience will be purified with an exquisite and holy sensibility; the memory will become stored with divine truth and pious maxims. Fear will be softened into devout reverence, and the determining power, or choice of the soul, will cling to the Divine will, the rule of duty, as surely and steadily as the magnetic needle to the northern pole. Let supreme love to God reign in the soul, and the imagination too will soar to things in heaven, while sublunary grandeur and earthly scenes will be revolting. The

appetites also, controlled by divine love and holy fear will submit to the law of God and reason. But a character, formed from the impulse of the other human powers, must be comparatively low and dwarfed. The fear of God, though a religious motive, unsoftened by love, would only deter from transgression, but could never animate the heart with aspirings for holy obedience, and divine excellence. And even reason and conscience, the glory of man, without the glow of love, would often prove too slow in the gust of passion, seldom rise higher than cold and calculating justice, and at best, form but the cold-hearted christian. No, there is nothing but supreme love and regard to God can harmonize the human powers, animate and incline every one to its appropriate office, and concenter the whole in the Divine will and law. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

To such a mind, thus regenerated by the power of love, all the duties we owe to God will become a most delightful service. The study of his works and word will not be the dull round of a mere classic scholar, but an animating pursuit, opening new light and excellence to his increasing piety. The duties of prayer and worship will not be cold and reluctant, but from a fervent heart will ascend, as incense from the glowing altar. In the duties of meditation and silent piety, the God we love will be with us, in the closet, on the way, and in the vigils of the lonely night.

While this law of love gives alacrity to the duties of piety, it will naturally expand to all our relative and social duties. Loving God supremely, we shall love his children; and that more or less ardently, in proportion

as they bear his image. Realizing that they are endeared by a common relation to our God and Father Divine love will warm our hearts with kindness and friendly desires. And the more evidently, in any, the image of God shines, the more tenderly towards such, will the pious heart feel and admire. For their Creator's sake and their own, we shall love them, and be zealous to do them good.

Next to the God who made us, our highest love will cling to his first and dearest Son, who redeemed us. Receiving him as an embassador from heaven, faith will work by love. Descending from the bosom of his God, shining forth in the glory of his Father an express image of his person, and bearing, in one hand, the revealed divine will, and in the other, the sceptre of peace, the lovers of God, with grateful and devout affection, will recognise him as Zion's king, and covenant to him their willing obedience. If you love me keep my commandments. Love also is the fulfilling of the law, in all the relations of society. In the intellectual universe it is, what attraction is in the material, the bond of union. Numerous are the relations in society, both natural and instituted, that more or less closely connect the human race. The family and the church, the republic of letters and the State, have filled society with relations. These relations give rise to peculiar duties and proprieties of conduct. There is but one power in our nature that can reach all these duties and proprieties. Here is a wide field, to be sure, for the faithful and constant exercise of reason and conscience. But these are too slow and cold in their motions for this immense field of duty, which, every hour and moment,

calls for action. Here nothing is adequate but the celestial glow of love—adequate! I had almost said more than adequate. This angelic flame will keep the sympathies of the heart in vigorous life, to feel all these relations and duties, and to enlist, direct, and animate all the human powers to their proper action, to fulfil the law of love. This too will give a suavity of manner, that composes the sweetest cordial through our probationary journey.

But of the many and various relations of the social state, I know of none, except, perhaps, those of the same family, where the ardent glow of heavenly love is so essential, as that of the pastoral and ministerial. Indeed, it is not only an obvious, but an all-interesting truth, that piety and philanthropy, supreme love to God and love to man, constitute the primary essential qualification of a gospel minister.

1st. The character he assumes, in a very eminent sense, requires this. The most prominent motto of his armor is,—'My kingdom is not of this world.' The objects and pursuits, that wing the imagination and animate the energies of the men of the world, the faithful pastor must, in a great measure, relinquish. Whilst others are striving for gain, improving their estates, watching the markets, calculating for domestic grandeur and splendid appearance, canvassing elections and seeking for exalted places of honor and wealth; the minister of Christ must be devoted to the spiritua wants and calls of his people, or immured within the walls of his library, studying and praying, and waxing pale over the midnight lamp. In this routine of incessant mental labor, (the severest kind of labor) what is there to ani-

mate him, and to keep in active life all his energies. Worldly motives here are but base and deadening alloy. Here nothing will do but love for the master he serves, love for the souls of men, and the love of Divine truth. This, and only this, will shed a cheering and inviting light around the walls of his study, and give fresh strength to his researches, and labors. How well our Divine master knew this, he has set in a strong light, when giving to Peter his apostolic commission. His words are, Peter, 'Lovest thou me, more than these?' these objects of sense, *then* 'feed my lambs and my sheep.' To show the primary importance of this Divine love to render him a faithful shepherd, again and again he reiterates the all-important question 'Peter, lovest thou me?'

To see still farther, the importance of this heaven born, all-conquering principle, look a moment longer at the labors and trials of the pastoral charge. To gain an adequate view here, one must have labored himself in this wide and painful, but delightful field. Here the faithful pastor's first duty is to cultivate his own vineyard—to imbue his own heart with the christian graces. In order to teach others, he must first teach himself. The Bible is the minister's text-book. From this wide and deep profound, he must draw all his subjects. This book of God conveyed to man through his mediatorial Son, contains all the truths, duties, promises and consolations of our holy religion. In order to bring them all forth to the great congregation, in their order, fulness and proportion, the preacher's mind and heart must be filled with them.—That his discourses may not be mere moral essays, spun from his own fancy, but enriched

supported and solemnized by the authority of the word. He must study also the works, as well as the word of God; that the lights of both nature and grace, beaming from the same fountain, may, with increased energy, brighten upon his own mind, and give additional power to his pen and tongue. These Divine books of light and knowledge have occupied the most sublime geniuses, in all ages of the church, and into which angels have desired to look. These sacred studies call not only for the most laborious research, but also the most anxious responsibility; that the preacher may declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. These sacred studies are to be pursued, not merely while the charm of novelty allures, but for life, with prayers and fears, and devoted mind. For this vast, anxious, persevering labor there needs a powerful, and ever-living excitement. The love of Divine truth, the love of God and the love of souls, in all their life and energy, must here be felt. This will convert labor into pleasure, and this most assiduous duty into the delight of life. As a scribe well instructed in the kingdom of God, such a mind will be prepared to bring forth from his treasures things new and old.

The pulpit is the next field of ministerial labor. Of all places, next to heaven, the sacred desk is that, where, it seems, love ought to glow, as it were, with a visible flame. A worshipping assembly in perfect neatness and decorum, with looks serene and friendly, bowing before the high Eternal, is the most interesting sight that earth can show. Who is adequate to this great occasion? Shall the preacher, more concerned for his exterior than his heart, come, with affectation and

pride, to display his person, his genius and oratorical powers! How perfectly unworthy? If he come, as he ought, an ambassador of Christ, his prime object will be to bring divine light and improvement into the sanctuary. To effect this immense purpose, his words must reach and penetrate the hearts of the hearers. This they can never do, unless they come from the heart, warmed with the flame of heavenly love. Flowing from a mind deeply imbued and animated with Divine love and holy benevolence, his addresses will be mild, but urgent, kind, but pungent, persuasive, but powerful. This holy rhetoric, and this only, is worthy of the pulpit.

In the next place, the very profession of the priest seems to be, the making of prayers, the most anxious part of the sacred office. By this holy exercise, he must lead the worshipping assembly up to the throne of grace, pour the balm of consolation into the bereaved heart; sooth the wounded spirit with grateful hope, cheer the lonely chamber of sickness with spiritual comforts, and administer support to the departing soul. To be always prepared for those pious duties, his mind must be fraught with matter, his tones softened with the milk of human kindness, and his sympathies touched and refined, by that love, which is the fulfilling of the law.

Again, that this christian grace should occupy a large space in the heart of one, who officiates in holy things, for a moment, consider him ministering at the baptismal font, and the communion altar. The imagination cannot depict a scene so intwined with the best feelings of the human heart, as those displayed in the ordinances of the gospel. To initiate into the kingdom of Christ by

the significant application of water, the young immortal, fresh from the Creator's hand, innocent, immaculate, and fair as the new-blown lily; to sympathize in the grateful love of the parental heart; and to offer to the Creator and Redeemer their consecrating vows and prayers, is, peculiarly the office of sanctity and love. Would not, *must* not, reason pronounce it sacrilege, to minister in this labor of love, with a cold heart?

Especially is the glow of heavenly love essential at the communion altar. While the heart is a stranger to this angelic sentiment, to break the bread of life, and to pour out the blood of sprinkling, seems like crusifying afresh the Lord of glory. To fulfil the law of Christ in this hallowed service, the faith that works by love, evidently, ought to prevail, and sway the affections of the whole man. The communion board containing an exhibition of the strongest love that was ever shown to our fallen world: how fit, how proper, how essential, that the heart and lips of the ministering servant, be touched with a live coal from this heavenly altar? My brethren, how imposing the resolve of the royal psalmist; I will wash my hands in innocence, and thus will I approach thine altar, Oh Lord.

Again,—Shod with this preparation of the gospel of peace, the faithful shepherd, feeling a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of his flock, will, as his other duties permit, go from house to house, to learn their spiritual wants, and to nurture the growth of religious friendship. This to a cold heart would be an irksome service, but a peaceful joy to a heart warmed with the love of official duty, of Zion, and Zion's King. If he sincerely love his Divine Master, he will also feed his

lambs with peculiar delight. Viewing these as the nursery of the church, and state, that they be rightly inclined in age, his heart's desire, prayer and continued exertion will be, that in the morning of life, they be correctly bent and nurtured, both in the school and the sanctuary.

Still farther, where this spirit of Christ reigns in the heart, he will not consider all his duties confined within the limits of his own fold. All his fellow labourers will share in his charity, and his prayers will embrace the whole human family. This expansive charity, in the times on which we have fallen, has become superlatively important; that it may gradually crumble down the wall of exclusion, unhappily erected within the one common fold. Claiming the right, from his own researches, of being fully persuaded in his own mind, reason would think, that the charity, which thinketh no evil, would readily grant the same right to others.—Persuaded that man is accountable for his creed only to Him, who knows all the powers and exercises of the mind, reason would think, that the charity which vaunteth not itself, would not condemn and set at naught a brother, because he differs from us in some speculative articles of belief. How natural, how pressing the duty, that the preacher of the blessed gospel, who loves his divine master in sincerity, be ever ready to extend the right hand of fellowship to all who give "lucid proof, that they are sincere in the same sacred cause"?

The faithful minister must have his trials also, as well as his labours. Friends may grow cold, slander may point her poisoned darts; some professed

friends may be seen but seldom in the house of worship; others while there inattentive, or drowsy; some may watch for his halting, and carp at his preaching.—His heart will be pained to see many turn their backs upon the feast of love, and often to feel as though he were spending his strength for naught. To sustain and overcome all these trials, nothing is adequate but that love which is the fulfilling of the law. This will inspire him with fortitude to overcome evil with good, and to console his feelings by the consciousness of rectitude.—This leads me briefly to add, that after all, example must constitute the crowning excellence of all the faithful minister's labours of love. Example is the most powerful preacher. Let the preacher be an angel in the pulpit, but out of it volatile, trifling, or irascible, and sometimes seeming to overstep the line of decency, if not of rectitude, and his preaching will never reach the heart. His sacred performances will become a mere farce to the hearers; and while he may please their eyes and ears, their hearts will turn from him. 'Though I speak with the tongue of angels, and have not charity, I am nothing'—can effect nothing. To enforce the duties he inculcates, the preacher must practise them.—Let his daily walks be conformed to the spirit of his prayers and his preaching, and his hearers will feel him to be in earnest, and their hearts will be open to his exhortations and rebukes. Convinced from his life, that he loves his master, and their souls, they will receive him as an angel of light, and on every Lord's day return from the sanctuary pleased and improved.

But I must hasten to say, that the endearing relation of society and pastor involves duties on them also, that

can be discharged only by the law of love. Convince your minister by your kind attentions, and prayers, that you love him for his sacred works, and he will be a strange anomaly, if he be not quickened and animated in his official duties. In the retired walks of his study he will think of you for good, and bear you on his heart at the throne of grace. I know you would be gratified and delighted to see your minister animated in the sacred desk,—then encourage his heart and hold up his hands by crowding these courts, by an interested attention, and sympathy of manner. Would you be gratified that your pastor's calls be friendly and not long between—then receive him cordially as a minister of the gospel, and encourage religious conversation. Would you rejoice to see your minister take a deep interest in the education of your dear children, and his ministrations to give them pious impressions in the morning of life? I know you would—then lead them early to the sanctuary, and teach them to love, honour, and respect their minister. Would you desire your pastor to be faithful, plain and close in his preaching? Then be careful, by a kind manner, that he may be among you without fear. From these mutual assiduities of christian love, the connection will be glorious and happy.—Persevere in this christian course, and you may, you will indulge an animating hope, that God will bless you. That you will again experience the former days of his right hand; under the long-to-be-remembered ministrations of those venerable fathers of the church, whose graves are among you and their triumphant spirits, we trust, rejoicing in Heaven; when thsee walls were crowded and these altars thickly surrounded by your worthy fath-

ers and mothers communing on the bread of life. O, my beloved friends, could the speaker live to see these fond anticipations realized, under the present auspicious connection, he would be ready to exclaim with good old Simeon—'Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'—Amen.

THE

LIBERAL PREACHER:

A

MONTHLY PUBLICATION

OF

ORIGINAL SERMONS.

"THAT THEY MAY ADORN THE DOCTRINE OF GOD OUR SAVIOUR IN ALL THINGS."

VOLUME IV.

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SERMON I.

BY REV. HENRY WARE, JR.

THE PROMISE OF UNIVERSAL PEACE.

ISAIAH II. 4.

THEY SHALL BEAT THEIR SWORDS INTO PLOUGHSHARES AND THEIR SPEARS INTO PRUNING-HOOKS: NATION SHALL NOT LIFT UP SWORD AGAINST NATION, NEITHER SHALL THEY LEARN WAR ANY MORE.

It would not be easy to imagine a declaration which should appear more incredible than this must have done, at the age in which it was uttered. To 'learn war' was then, as it has always been, the grand employment, the peculiar art and ambition, of monarchs and of kingdoms. To suppose it abolished, to fancy it exchanged for the inglorious pursuits of the vine-dresser and the husbandman, was to suppose what in that age would be accounted an inconceivable degeneracy and humiliation. That the mind of any individual should then so far free itself from this universal prejudice, as to perceive in the abolition of war a subject of glory instead of shame; that it should so far penetrate into the future, as to understand that a condition of human society might arrive, in which it would be possible;—is a striking intimation of wisdom higher than that of man. There was nothing then existing in the state or tendency of the world, to suggest such a change to the most sagacious human foresight. When, therefore, we find 'holy men

of old,' in the confident language of our text, and in a variety of glowing anticipations scattered through their works, dwelling with delight on this idea of a peaceful futurity, we feel confirmed in our persuasion, that 'they spake not of themselves, but as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.'

How wonderful was the foresight of those venerable seers, may be perceived by reflecting, that nearly three thousand years have passed away, and there is yet discernible, by other men, only a tendency toward the result which they predicted. This tendency is growing every day more apparent, as the world advances in knowledge and civilization, and as the Christian religion is better understood. The number of those who perceive it, and feel it their duty to advance it, is every year increasing. By associations, through the press, and from the pulpit, they are endeavoring to quicken the growth of that sentiment, by the universal extension of which the desirable end must be accomplished; and at this season of the year, when the Christian church is celebrating the nativity of the Prince of Peace, it seems a suitable occasion for us to join them in their endeavor, and attempt to second their philanthropic exertions.*

I have accordingly selected for present consideration the words of this remarkable prophecy;—a prophecy, which all who understand the magnitude and extent of the Evils of War will ardently desire may be accomplished, while none will doubt its practicability, who

*A large number of the clergy of the United States, of various denominations, have engaged to preach annually on this subject at the present season of the year. See 'THE CALUMET,' a two-monthly journal, published at New York by the American Peace Society.

will understand by what principles the custom is sustained, and what principles are in operation for its downfall. These are my three points;—The Evils of War are such as to demand that the efforts of all good and patriotic men be directed against it; while the weakness of the principles which sustain it, and the strength of the principles which oppose it, give encouragement to believe that they shall not labor in vain.

I. The Evils of War can only be stated; there is no time to describe them. But the bare definition of war is sufficient for our purpose. It is the arming of one nation against another, for the express purpose of destroying so many lives and creating so much misery, that the one shall be forced to yield some point to the other. In this definition there is no ingredient but what is evil. The purpose is evil;—slaughter and misery. The consequences are evil;—slaughter and misery. There is no pretence, indeed, of any thing good, except in the ultimate consequences. These, it is pleaded, may be beneficial, notwithstanding the amount of immediate wretchedness. And yet, remarkably enough, it is acknowledged by all who have attentively read the history of the world, that the vast majority of wars have ended, either without result, that is, leaving the parties just where they were in relation to the subject of controversy; or with a result which evidently might have been attained without the conflict; or in the victory of some selfish leader, whose object was, not the public good, but personal aggrandizement. Now this is an admission, that, speaking in general terms, war is a sys-

tem of evils, and that the good consequences which may follow in its train are occasional and incidental, not its natural and appropriate results.

Observe more particularly the character of these evils. The first is the waste of human Life; by sudden stroke in the field, by slow torture from severe wounds, by fatigue, by famine, by pestilent disease. The sword kills its thousands, and we learn their numbers in the recital of history; but the other causes of loathsome, lingering, inglorious destruction, slay their tens of thousands unreported. No one writes the history of the hospitals, whose crowded tenants languish and die in every form of horrid torment; or of the road-side, where the wearied and feeble sink down and perish, while the army marches on. Yet, doubtless, the number of those sacrificed to exhaustion and disease equals the hecatombs of the battle-ground. And when we read that two hundred thousand lives were destroyed in the battles of a seven years' conflict, we find it necessary to double the number, in order to arrive at a just estimate of the actual waste of life.

Next, observe the waste of Property;—harvests destroyed, ships plundered, villages burned, cities pillaged, whole countries ravaged; so that no one can follow the track of a campaign, and not be made to see, that it is little else than robbery on a great scale. So obviously is this the case, that, boast as we please of the melioration of modern civilized warfare, the armies of Napoleon, and the navies of Britain, and even the petty skirmishers on our own frontiers, had enough of the character of banditti and buccaneers, to have hanged their leaders as robbers and pirates, if they had not been

protected by national flags. And God knows whether a national flag ought to be a protection for such outrages!

Again, observe the waste of Happiness;—of which, however, nothing need be said, after what has just been remarked of those insatiable destroyers of happiness, death and plunder. But though they may seem to fill the cup, we shall better understand the bitterness of its mixture, if we will cast a thought on those, who are made to drink it; not only those, who, in the wretched region which is the seat of the war, are made beggars, whose homes are burned, their houses sacked, their daughters and sisters violated, their husbands and brothers slain or made captive;—we must add to these the multitude of sufferers on the other side, who are too often overlooked because of their remoteness from the scene of violence. They know nothing of the presence of the host, they see nothing of the garments rolled in blood; but their sons and lovers never return from the cruel field to comfort the widowed parent and desolate wife, or be the gladness and support of the lonely fireside; or, if they return, return but to afflict; crippled in body, ruined in constitution, helpless in affairs, and, worse than all, depraved and brutalized in character.

For this is the next point in the description,—the destruction of Morals;—an accompaniment of the hideous occupation of the soldier, so common, so almost universal, so all but inevitable, that it has passed into a proverb. What is the camp, but a community in which the moral code of civil life has been suspended, in which life has become a trifle and a jest, where its sacredness is despised, and the purity of its relations sneered at? What are its virtues, but slavish obedience, and violent

and brute courage, and systematic indifference to the rights and feelings of others? what its business, but to injure and revenge? what its recreations, but debauchery and impurity? Is it not so? Read the historians of the interior camp, and learn. The majority of its inhabitants are made up, in most cases, of the debased, the intemperate, the broken in character, the desperate in fortune, for whom the honest occupations of peace have no charm, and many of whom have suffered the penalty of pursuing its dishonest callings. To these are joined, from various motives, young men of high spirit and adventurous romance, of good education and virtuous domestic habits; and, after exposure to such influences, under such circumstances, how many of them will return to their pure homes for any other purpose but to pollute them, and be a grief to those that loved them? In short, who does not know that War is a prime Corrupter? It disbands its hordes, when it has done with them, to be the curse of their own country in peace, as they have been that of the enemy's in battle.

Without going any further, therefore, this simple statement respecting the destruction of Life, Property, Happiness and Virtue, is ample testimony to the evils of War. If we but remember, further, how these evils have been always present among the nations, how it has always been a part of national policy to promote them, how large a portion of the cares and expense of governments have been directed to making provision for this one object, and how large a number of the higher orders in society have been educated to no profession but that of conducting armies,—we shall see an amount of ill spread over the history of the human race, which is

unutterably appalling. And yet perhaps, if, like Sterne, when he draws the picture of slavery, I could single out from the confused crowd of sufferers some one individual,—for example, that unfortunate and accomplished young officer, who was disabled on the field of Waterloo, and overlooked by those who bore away the wounded, lay alone for several days and nights, unheeded and unrefreshed, his body imbedded in the soft wet ground, till at length when discovered, the worms from the earth beneath him had eaten their way into his living flesh;—if I could faithfully draw one such picture as this, it might better enable us to comprehend and realize the horrors of this infatuating barbarism, than any general views of calamity and distress that could be given.

II. But I must leave this point, and proceed to inquire how it happens, when the case is palpably thus, that civilized men can shut their eyes to the abomination, and go on making regular provision for perpetuating its tremendous ills.

To reply to this inquiry fully would demand a long and detailed investigation. But the true answer, and a satisfactory one, may be given in a few words. War is continued through the power of custom, tradition, prescription, fashion, education,—or whatever that is to be called, which makes man so much the creature of circumstances, and leads him to adopt without inquiry the usages which he finds established in the community. This is a usage consonant to certain propensities of human nature, agreeable to 'the lusts which war in the members,' and therefore welcome to men of a certain character; while the simple fact that it is a usage of

all nations and ages, prevents its real character from being perceived or inquired after. It is from precisely this cause that many other absurd and iniquitous practices keep their place in the world. For how long a period did the African slave-trade pass unquestioned even by the best men; yet it was only necessary to look at it deliberately, in order to its being driven with execration from the civilized world. So it is with the domestic slave-trade of our own country;—a trade acquiesced in, with all its cruelties and crimes, only because it is established, and which, if not already existing, could be no more introduced amongst this people, than the savage rites of Juggernaut. Precisely so in the case of War. It is a thing established. It is found in the world by every generation that comes forward, and is taken up by it as one of the institutions of society, no less fixed and inevitable than the ordinances of nature.

And then, further, the circumstances and methods of ordinary education are conformed in their character to this actual condition of things, and tend in turn to strengthen and perpetuate it. The boy's first playthings are the drum and the sword, his first amusement to march in company with a feather in his cap and an ornamented coat, his first lessons are drawn from books which are full of military images and the spirit of heroic adventure, and even his academic leisure is sanctified by the mimicry of martial parade. Thus the very atmosphere of society, through which the child breathes his way into manhood, is tainted with this corrupting ingredient, and every successive generation is made to inherit the prejudices of the preceding.

If further causes be demanded, it is easy to perceive how they arise out of this which has been mentioned. We find them in the circumstance, that in this institution is opened to ambitious men an obvious path to distinction;—in the circumstance, that government has constituted the army a distinct profession, and thus made it for the interest of a large class in the community that war should not be abolished;—in the fact, that the great law of Right has never yet been made the absolute rule for the conduct of political affairs, or the morality of political men;—and in the fact, that rulers and people have yet to learn, that the principles of rectitude which bind men in their private relations, are equally binding in their public relations. I do but glance at these points. They show what it is that upholds so strange a barbarism in the civilized world. It is custom and education. These are its supporters;—powerful, it is true, but not indomitable. The race may be improved by better education, as well as individuals, and its customs may be changed as well as those of an individual. As a man corrects a bad habit by applying the remedy to each separate action in which the habit consists, so the evil customs of society are to be broken, by appealing to the individual members who compose it, and correcting the faulty opinion or character in them. Thus the improvement which began in the suggestion of a single mind, spreads from man to man, till it becomes the universal judgment of the community. Very dear and inveterate errors have been by this process overthrown. It was thus that Luther began a great service in religion, and Galileo in science; and, to speak of vulgar practices which once prevailed, the

whipping post and the stocks have disappeared, ignominious and cruel punishments have ceased, the slave trade has been interdicted, and why should not war follow in the train? It can hardly be said to be more deeply rooted than were some of these other obsolete abuses; it like them depends for its existence almost exclusively on the circumstance that it is a custom; it derives no more support than they were thought to do from the nature and necessity of the case; and it is, if possible, still more decidedly opposed by reason, policy and religion. This I was next to show.

III. *Reason* certainly does not sustain the custom. On the contrary, it is not easy to say what would be accounted more unreasonable, if it were now a question whether the custom should be commenced. Suppose that the nations had hitherto adjusted their differences in some other way, and that the proposition were now made, that henceforward they should be adjusted by force. It needs no argument to show, that the whole world would reject it at once, as descending from a rational mode of arbitration, suited to intelligent beings, and adopting in its stead what could only be adapted to creatures whose sole weapons are horns and teeth. In truth, has not this trial been made? Half a century ago, there was the commencement on this continent of a new combination among states, when they arranged their mutual relations, and agreed to the terms of their mutual intercourse. Was it one of these, that their future differences should be decided by appeal to arms? Was this so much as proposed? It might have been a thousand years ago; but in the present age, it would be thought no more absurd to restore the ordeal by fire, or

the judicial combat in private life, than to establish arbitration between the states by arms. Would it not be equally so among the powers of Europe, if now called on for the first time to regulate their international intercourse? No one can doubt it;—especially if he remember, how the tendency of increased civilization has already exhibited itself, even while this venerable custom retains so much of its authority and glory, in causing questions of national dispute to be referred to the quiet umpirage of an impartial power, which would formerly have arrayed armies and shaken kingdoms.

But more particularly. Sound reason certainly does not advise or sanction that a rational being should conduct important concerns on principles which put out of view his rational attributes. Yet, precisely this is done in the appeal to the sword. War decides great questions, on principles which wholly put out of view man's rational attributes. It sets up the judgment of his physical nature, above that of his intellectual. It resolves problems of moral or social right, which pertain to the understanding, by instruments of bodily force. It allows and establishes the supremacy of body over mind, of strength over wisdom; and grants the rightfulness, in principle, that hordes of savages should seize and possess the fairest regions of civilization and refinement. Look at the matter fairly, and you cannot deny that it comes to this result. For although it may be true, that, where two nations are of nearly equal resources and power, the battle may be gained by the superior intellect of one of the commanders, yet it can never be so, where there is any considerable physical inequality. In such a case, brute force must prevail. And then is exhibited

the mortifying absurdity of beings endowed with reason, and thereby placed at the head of the animal creation, abandoning the guardianship of that sacred faculty, and submitting themselves, like the inferior races, to the mercy of mere corporeal strength.

Try it too by a parallel case,—the controversies of private life. The same barbarous days which originated public war, permitted questions relating to personal wrong to be settled by private war. But it would now be accounted the extreme of absurdity, to put such questions on the issue of single combat, since neither sword nor pistol has the power of discerning right and wrong, the just and the unjust. There is, indeed, one private controversy, which civilization has not yet wholly taken from the control of this ancient barbarism, namely the controversy of Honor;—so that while all the world would laugh at the folly of him who should propose to decide by duel a law-suit respecting insurance or an accusation of theft, there are some with enough of the dark ages hanging about them to esteem it quite agreeable to reason to settle questions of decorum or reputation in this way. They would be unable to maintain their gravity if the man accused of fraud should seek to prove his innocence by fighting his accuser; but if one have spoken an ill-advised word, or touched the reputation of a friend, it is extremely reasonable to believe that a duel will remedy the wrong. No matter which is slain, the aggressor or the injured, or neither of them; the result is equally certain,—the wrong is repaired, the stain is wiped off. Now the infinite absurdity as well as blasphemous impiety of this sanguinary folly is so well understood that even a military Emperor could say, "I DESPISE the

arguments of those who seek to justify it." The laws of most nations regard it as a high-handed immorality; and very few are found so abandoned as at once to dare the justice of their country and defy the displeasure of God. Yet it is altogether in vain that men have attempted to establish any difference in principle, between this atrocious solecism of deciding private quarrels by murder, and the established legalised system of manslaughter by which national disputes are settled. They both argue moral questions by weapons of physical force; they both subject right to the dominion of might; they both advocate the placing of human life and human happiness *beneath* considerations of mere property and personal pique; they both pretend to remedy a great evil by indefinitely increasing it; they both esteem it a less crime to bring unmeasured wretchedness on the helpless and unoffending, than to forgive an injury or forego revenge. Can any thing be named which has less the countenance of sober reason?

Policy is equally opposed to this strange madness. True policy is wisdom; and wisdom is sagacious to select the means which best accomplish the desired end. Is this a description of the war policy? What are we to say to the immense expenditure of wealth, the dreadful waste of life, the cruel wreck of happiness, the profligate corruption of morals? Is it to be believed that the great purposes of Society, the beneficent ends of government, the liberalizing influences of knowledge, refinement and art, can be secured in no other way than through this path of blood and sin? What are those purposes, what are those ends, what are those influences, but the security of life, property, character and

happiness? And are they secured by the ruthless and desolating hand of battle? Are they promoted by that policy which is ready to put them in jeopardy upon every national misunderstanding, and sacrifice them without stint or remorse to the passions, or injustice, or ambition of a few individuals? and this, too, where the sacrifice must be, as the whole history of the world testifies, without any prospect of adequate compensation? For truly said one of our own statesmen, "It is an instrument entirely inefficient toward redressing wrong, and multiplies instead of indemnifying losses." It is therefore to be rejected with scorn from all judicious views of what constitutes the true policy of a nation.

But *Religion* is even more decidedly the enemy of War. That nations beneath the ancient mythologies and the modern barbarous idolatries should advocate and practise war, is not to be accounted strange. Worshippers of bloodthirsty divinities and devotees of an irrational faith, it was to be expected that they should imitate them in a bloody and irrational custom. But who can fail to be amazed at finding Christians,—disciples of a religion whose watchword is LOVE, and whose motto is "Peace on earth and good will toward men,"—inconsistently adhering to the practices of a benighted and depraved idolatry!

Nothing is susceptible of an easier demonstration than the opposition of Christianity to the spirit of war. What is Christianity? It is the religion communicated to men by divine revelation, that they might be delivered from iniquity and misery, and introduced to the highest and purest happiness. But certainly this is far from

being the object of War. What is the morality of the gospel? It would not be easy to describe it better than in the words of Paul:—"Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Try the spirit or morality of War by this description. Is War a spirit of *love*? is its temper benevolence and philanthropy and disinterested affection? Is it *joy*,—any joy but in that triumph which celebrates the humiliation and wretchedness of thousands? Is it *peace*? Is it *longsuffering*, or *gentleness*, or *meekness*? Not unless these things are consistent with impatient and exasperated ambition, cherished pride, and cool, deadly, calculating determination to brook no superiority and to trample an enemy under foot. Is it *temperance*?—Alas, this bare enumeration of the Christian graces is sufficient to silence all pretence of baptizing war with a Christian name. I do not say, that no warrior ever was a Christian; but, clearly, no man can be heartily devoted to the trade of the camp, its sincere advocate and faithful practitioner, and be *characterized* by his benevolent, pacific, forbearing, gentle, and meek disposition. He himself would only ridicule the idea, and avow, that if this be a true description of the Christian character, Paley was right in declaring, that "no two things can be more contrary than the *Christian* character and the *heroic*."

Look at the description of this character as given by Christ himself in his sermon on the Mount. It begins with the peculiar and distinguishing blessings pronounced on the meek, the pure, the humble, the merciful, the peace-makers, and proceeds to inculcate, in the most positive terms, the duties of forbearance and forgive-

ness, and the sinfulness of retaliation and revenge. Resist not evil; love your enemies; bless those that curse you; forgive if you would be forgiven. These precepts can hardly be incorporated among the principles which prevail in a state of warfare. Put upon them any qualification they can bear, they will not describe the morality of the camp. Nor can our Lord's perpetual lessons of purity and self-denial, be made consistent with the allowed and honored practices of military life.

Look at the Christian character as it was exhibited in the person of the holy Teacher himself. It needs but a glance at that illustrious image of sweetness, gentleness, tenderness and purity, to perceive how totally irreconcilable is the true Christian life, with the violence and passion, the lust and blood, which triumph in the indolence of the garrison and the splendors of battle. So the early disciples regarded it; and for two centuries, while their Lord's example was fresh and the church comparatively uncorrupted, no Christians were to be found in the profession of the soldier. They refused to bear arms, even at great personal hazard. They held sacred their Master's words;—"My kingdom is not of this world;—if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight."

Or take the argument in another point of view. What is the *result* to which Christianity tends by its prevalence in the world? Is it not, through the operation of a wide-spreading philanthropy, to promote to the utmost the well-being of men, and to establish amongst them an intercourse of mutual benefits? When we observe what it has already effected for the advancement of society and the removal of human ills, do

we not feel confident that its universal prevalence will be the establishment of the highest social order and happiness? But no one will describe in these terms the tendency of a state of war. Its prevalence never could be expected or designed to secure this state of universal brotherhood and social prosperity. The two things are absolutely incompatible. Just so far as the one triumphs, the other is defeated; as has been most truly said,—"If the christian disposition were universal, the case is clear; the world would be a society of friends. Whereas if the other disposition were universal, it would produce a scene of universal contention; the world could not hold a generation of such men."

It is therefore plain, that there exists a positive contradiction of the spirit of war to the spirit of Jesus Christ, and an irreconcilable opposition between the tendency of the one and the purposes of the other. The doctrine which came from God for the special blessing of the world, bears its decided testimony against this ancient practice of an unregenerate race, and in every step of its progress prepares for the fulfilment of the prophecy of our text. If so, what a rebuke to the Christian world! What an appeal to Christians, to see to it that they henceforth second, and no longer thwart, the beneficent tendency of their faith!

Such are the Evils of War, and such the Principles which severally support and oppose it. Ought it then to stand in the world? The destroyer of happiness, the corrupter of virtue, whose pride is to lay waste the fairest works of God and of man,—upheld in its place of power by no better warrant than that of custom and education and the will and interest of ambitious men,—

while reason rejects it, and true policy abhors it, and religion utters against it her most indignant denunciation;—ought it to stand? Let the friends of the human race answer. Let the rising generations which are coming forth into the action of society to adopt or to change the manners of their fathers, answer. Let the ministers and friends of Religion, who believe that God has declared all men to be brethren, and that the true prosperity of this earthly being is to be found in co-operation for the common good,—answer. And let every one, in his place, lift his voice and hand, and give one vote toward that universal ballot, by which mankind shall cast from its seat of power this bloody idol of a long infatuated world.

But is there encouragement to attempt any thing?

I say first, if it be a duty which we are called upon to perform, it is no matter whether there be any visible encouragement or not. Duty can be done, sooner or later. It must be begun,—in the dark, perhaps; but we shall work our way to the light.

But I say further, there is Encouragement; visible, ample encouragement.

The customs of a barbarian antiquity cannot stand before the advancing civilization of mankind. Many have already disappeared, like foul birds of night before the approaching day. Others are fast disappearing. This cannot remain forever. It has already been compelled greatly to modify its laws, and mitigate its severities, and put on airs of humanity and gentleness in accordance with the spirit of the times. And this spirit is itself still advancing. And as the true principles of reason are more universally and practically under-

stood; as they rise from the educated to the privileged ranks, and spread into the political and military departments; as the riper study of political economy makes known the true policy of society, and the better understanding of the rights of man compels the ruling families to recognize and promote the claims of the people; and, yet more, as Christianity goes on infusing its spirit more and more into all the interests and pursuits of man—elevating the whole character of social motives and social virtues, and compelling a universal reverence for Principle in public as well as personal concerns; while Education, the handmaid of religion and morals, trains the generations which are coming by a more and more thorough discipline of mind and heart;—a state of things will be brought about, in which it will be impossible for so gross an imposition as that of War to exist; impossible for so hateful an enemy to the true interests of man and the revealed purposes of God, to hold its place among the tolerated things of the world.

Already therefore the powers are at work which are to accomplish this desirable consummation. Already the process is begun by which God is to fulfil the amazing prediction of the text. The fire is kindled at the forges, where 'the swords are to be beaten into ploughshares and the spears into pruninghooks.' The teachers are already abroad, who shall persuade men to 'learn War no more.' If we would hasten the day, we have only to throw ourselves into the current of events, and we may row with the tide. There may be here and there a counter current; but the main stream is flowing steadily on, and the order of Providence is rolling forward the sure result. The school-

master and his companions, when they fill the world with well informed, well directed, thinking minds, and the philosopher with his pupils, when they offer to society those discoveries which go to better the condition and elevate the thoughts of their race,—are all working to this end. The philanthropist, in all his spheres of present activity and his various institutions for the relief of human ill, knitting together the bonds of human sympathy, making men feel like brethren, exciting interest in newer, higher, and more grateful objects than those of personal ambition and worldly policy,—is doing much to prepare the way. All associations for the cultivation and diffusion of knowledge and truth, all institutions for advancing the doctrine of Christ, and prevailing on men to love and follow his pure and peaceful character, for inculcating the true love of God, and teaching men their nearness to him and the real nature of the happiness which he has provided for them;—all these,—and every Bible Society and Missionary Society, every Sunday School and every philanthropic enterprize,—are agents for the cause of Peace; are heralds of the day and hasteners of the day, when all men shall be brethren, and the law of nations shall be the law of love. War has been the offspring of illregulated and ignorant passions, and perverted views. Let Religion regulate passion, and better objects be presented to the gifted and aspiring, and the restlessness and contentions of men will cease. They will rejoice in the gladness of that day, when Jesus, the Prince of Peace, shall reign king of nations as he is of saints, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

We see therefore, with our own eyes, that a way is rapidly opening for the accomplishment of this glorious work. *This is the purpose which is purposed upon the whole earth, and this the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?*

SERMON II.

BY REV. NATHAN PARKER, D. D.
OF PORTSMOUTH, N. H.*

CHRISTIANITY A MESSAGE, NOT OF WRATH, BUT OF MERCY.

1 THESSALONIANS V. 9.

FOR GOD HATH NOT APPOINTED US TO WRATH, BUT TO OBTAIN SALVATION BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

It becomes the duty of those who dispense religious instructions frequently to speak the language of warning, of serious admonition. They are not permitted, fidelity to their Master and benevolence to men will not allow them, to dwell perpetually upon the peace and joy of good men. Why not? Because all whom they address are not, in the Christian acceptation of the term, good men. Were they, then the dispensing of Christian instruction would indeed be truly delightful. But it is not so, and we greatly deceive ourselves if we believe that it is. No; carelessness of duty, thoughtlessness, open contempt of religion, devoted worldliness, and persevering habits of vice abound. Repentance must be preached; and it must be urged by all the

*We have, through the kindness of friends, obtained permission to use a manuscript of the late Dr Parker, whose image we can only recall with mingled feelings of delight and admiration for what he was, and of sadness that his voice will no more be heard either in 'the great congregation' or among his brethren on earth.

motives which Christianity supplies. The sinner's heart must be reached, his vices must be rebuked, the dangers which threaten him must be clearly brought into his view; he must be made to feel his guilt, and to fly from threatened ruin. Repentance is preached, and its proper motives are urged upon the conscience. We are then told, that we misrepresent the gospel; that the gospel is good news, and we bring tidings of evil; that the gospel is grace, and we proclaim wrath.

Let it be our present purpose to place this subject in its proper light. 'God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Is there any inconsistency between this precious declaration, and the setting before the sinner all the motives which should lead him to repentance?

1. Christianity does not create the miseries of the guilty. There was a settled plan of government for the moral world before Christianity had existence. The great arrangements were made, man's moral powers were bestowed, they had a definite character, and an abuse of the trust committed to him must of necessity be followed with unhappiness. Before Christianity existed, there was a connexion between virtue and happiness, vice and misery. It would have been so, if God had never communicated with mankind by express revelation. That which was calculated to develope and strengthen men's intellectual powers, would have increased his capacities of happiness; that which was of an opposite tendency, would have produced an opposite effect.

The discoveries of medical science have imparted no new properties to man's physical nature, or

to the causes acting upon it. Before they were made, the arrangement of God's providence with respect to what would act favorably or otherwise upon man's body was the same that it is now. Poison is poison still. A pure atmosphere is now health-giving, and that which is loaded with pollution brings with it disease and death. Intemperance acts upon the body of the civilized man in a similar way as upon the savage. An abuse of his animal nature is followed with the appropriate effects of violence, it causes suffering. Medical science does not change the arrangements of God's providence; it does not make that noxious, which God has made healthy, nor that safe, which he has made dangerous. When the well instructed physician points out the fatal consequences of certain habits, he does not make them fatal. They would be so, were his lips sealed in eternal silence. His more accurate knowledge may give a more perfect view of what will promote or injure health, than is possessed by the uneducated, but it does not control the operation of natural causes. Is he to be regarded then as cruel, and his warnings as the overflowings of a bitter spirit, because he points out the sources of misery? Is medical science to be charged with the guilt of making man suffer, because it clearly points out the way which leads to suffering? No; its warnings are kind; and it comes with a healing power to mitigate the sufferings which have been incurred, to restore the afflicted again to health and enjoyment.

Christianity also found man in a state of guilt and suffering. She fully lays open the cause of that suffering. But had she been silent for ever, the miseries of

sin would still have afflicted the guilty; they would have spread over the world, and man would have suffered. On earth this must have continued to be the situation of those who violated the fundamental laws of their own nature. If man is destined to exist beyond the grave, then the same disregard of truth and duty, the same violence to his own nature, must extend its consequences into the future world. The wages of sin would still be death, whether religion pointed out the danger or were silent. Christianity therefore does not create the miseries of the guilty.

2. The great object of Christianity is to alleviate and remove the miseries to which man is exposed.

I here advert to the circumstances attending the character of Christ and to his life, to impress you with the belief, that there can be nothing unkind or oppressive in his instructions or purposes. How was Christ ushered into the world? In a situation of all others the most humble. While the hosts of heaven were celebrating his birth and rejoicing in the glad tidings which he was about to proclaim, he was found reposing not upon a splendid couch, amid attendants who usually wait on royalty, but in a manger. After he was inaugurated into his high and holy office by the descent of the Spirit of God upon him, did he then assume the imposing forms of earthly grandeur? No; the utmost meekness and humility marked his character. He appeared 'in the form of a servant.' There was in his deportment the most captivating gentleness. The sway which he desired to exert over man was that which belongs to truth and to virtue. There was no show of any authority which did not belong

to truth and righteousness. Like a lamb he patiently endured the opposition of man, and never exerted the power which belongs merely to earthly greatness. If he was resisted in his benevolent efforts, he wept, but never called to his aid the instruments with which human ambition would make its way to power. Endeavor to place before you the lovely picture of Jesus, to represent his character in all its mildness, its patience, its fortitude, its love, its submission, its piety. See him throwing aside a crown, when offered to him, not as ambition would have done, with an inward longing that it might again be presented and that it might be pressed upon him till it might safely be received and worn; but with a fixed and steady purpose, with an honest feeling beaming forth from his countenance, and bearing a rebuke which could not be resisted to those who would vainly attempt to obscure the brightness of his character by the trappings of mere human greatness. Witness his unostentatious efforts to diffuse the light of God's truth, his patience, the affection with which he wooed the sinner to God. See him as he stands by the devoted city, Jerusalem, as he contemplates the wretched doom of its inhabitants, whom he has in vain attempted to save, and who are soon to procure and to witness his crucifixion. His gentle spirit melts in tenderness. He has no vengeance to execute upon his enemies. Lamentation breaks forth from his lips, tears fall from his eyes. Can this be a messenger of God's wrath to man? O! no. He wields not the weapons of vengeance; they suit not his hands. He is 'a merciful high priest.' He came to the earth as the messenger of God's love.

Again, I ask, what is the language of the instructions of Jesus, of the means of grace with which he supplies men, of the threatenings which he utters against the perseveringly ungodly? Read over his gospel, examine the spirit which pervades his instructions, and you cannot mistake the kindness of his purposes. Every word, every provision is full of tenderness. He seems to say to men,—I approach you not to throw embarrassments in your way, but to aid and comfort you; to pour light upon your path, and joy into your hearts. His language is,—I found you struggling with difficulties, I offer to you strength, that you may surmount them; I found you unconscious of your enemies, and yet suffering from the wounds which they had inflicted; I show to you in their true character these enemies, and guard you against their treacherous wiles, and I come with a healing power to assuage and remove the anguish which they have inflicted. My office is not that of an avenger, but of a deliverer, of a saviour.—Is not this the spirit which Christ's gospel breathes? I appeal to your own consciences upon this subject. All I ask is, that a rational decision may be formed, and that you may feel and act according to such decision.

Examine with care those parts of the Saviour's instructions, which are designed to give the most vivid representations of the miseries of guilt. Surely no religious teacher ever brought forward more startling views upon this subject, than Jesus Christ. They are examined by the sensitive, and they turn from them with horror, or they task their ingenuity to soften them and explain them away. And I mourn to say too, that these views are not unfrequently brought forward by

Christian teachers as if they delighted in pictures of guilt and wretchedness; as if they thought, that terror was the only instrument which the benevolent Jesus had put into their hands, and fear the only passion in the human heart on which they were commissioned to operate. But examine the manner in which Jesus himself treats this awful subject. His statements are indeed made with great plainness and directness; but are they made with the feelings of triumphant cruelty? The very question to every Christian mind has the appearance almost of impiety. It can be answered but in one way. The patience with which Jesus endured the opposition of sinners, and the tenderness with which he urged them to accept the mercy of God, show the kindness of his spirit. He spoke to them of danger, but it was that he might deliver them from wo. There was no trampling them down, and triumphing in their discomfiture, as might be expected from an unfeeling human despot. All was compassion and love. His was the kindness of the physician, who, while he faithfully lays open the nature and the causes of disease, soothes the patient and applies the remedy. He has not caused the malady, but he comes to assuage suffering and to restore health. The compassion of Jesus is that of one, who seeing a friend passing to the very verge of a precipice and about to make a fatal plunge into the abyss below, comes to him in love, wins his attention and gently leads him to safe and pleasant paths. He is not one who exults at the danger which threatens him, who comes to him to picture in glowing colors this danger, to excite his imagination, and then with a malignant joy to urge him forward and push him into

the yawning gulf. It is not wrath, but mercy then, that marks the spirit of the Saviour's interposition. He speaks of danger, but of danger which would exist were he silent for ever. He speaks in mercy, and if he is rejected, it is guilt that rejects him, and the guilty must suffer. Witness his emotions, his tears, when the sufferings of the guilty Jews were before him. They are not the emotions of an earthly ambition; tears of compassion flow not from the devoted slaves of an earth-born selfishness. Jesus brings no weapons of vengeance in his hands. He falls himself before his enemies, and if they suffer, it is not by his wrath, but by their own guilt.

The urgent entreaty of Jesus to repentance, the clearness with which he enforces the duties of men, the promise of a divine helper, the hope full of immortality, speak forth his compassionate regard for the children of men; his earnest desire to exalt and save them. All the means of grace which he has imparted have a direct reference, not to man's ruin, but to his salvation. The whole system of Christianity supposes danger previously existing, and it comes to bring deliverance from this danger, and to guide men to perfect happiness. As Christians, therefore, 'we are not appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.'

3. Of the influence of Christianity upon the present happiness of men, we are able to form but an imperfect estimate; for this divine religion is but very partially obeyed. Enough is known however to show that it is not a messenger of wrath, but of mercy. Where is the greatest amount of happiness, — where the gospel is

best understood and most perfectly obeyed, or where it is most reviled and least operative? You doubt not at all what answer should be returned to this interrogatory. You at once, if you have any adequate notions of the character of Christianity, are ready to assert, that were any community completely imbued with the spirit of Jesus and obedient to his commands, there would be a happy and prosperous society; the great interests of men would be carefully protected, the excesses of passion would be checked, human character would be exalted, and man would be comparatively happy. This would be the direct effect of the influence of Christ. He cannot then be the minister of wrath, but of kindness.

Now look to individual character and condition. Take the man, who has so far been able to resist temptations, that he is not betrayed into any revolting, humiliating vices. He improves his mind, he governs his passions, with regularity and success engages in the usual occupations of men, but confines all his views to the present world. Is he a happy man, so happy as it would seem from the very structure of his nature he might be? So far he has proceeded unchecked, and there has been enjoyment in his domestic relations, in occupation and in success. But is there no unsatisfied desire of his nature? If not, then whence that involuntary reference, which every man feels, whether he expresses it or not, to a higher Being and to a future existence. This man may be envied; but it is not possible, that he can see other circles broken in upon by death, other men disappointed in their schemes, and that he can look forward to the day as not far distant, when at last he shall cease to exist,

without having touched within him a chord, which will vibrate, and which will bring over him a shuddering apprehension of evil. Is he on the whole a happy man? Would it not be a blessing to him, with the same measure of earthly good which he now enjoys, were he deeply impressed with the connexion between his own soul and God; were he to feel deeply thankful to Him, and to regard the present good as a pledge of eternal love, and to look to the future with the assurance of endlessly increasing happiness? Would not his character be more exalted, and his happiness more complete, were 'Christ formed in his soul the hope of glory'? Then Christianity is full of mercy; for it is its holy and benevolent purpose to impart that influence which shall bind the human soul to God, which shall educate it for happiness, eternal happiness.

But it is not permitted to any man, whether devout or irreligious, to pass through life borne on to life's close only by prosperous gales. You acknowledge this. Then look at those in different circumstances of earthly trial, yet all distressed. This man is depressed, he murmurs against God, and his very sighs kindle to a brighter flame the fire which is devouring him. That man will not brook his trials, and he turns upon society, and endeavors by artifice or violence to improve his fortunes. Another sinks down in despondency, and drowns his sorrows in the cup of intoxication. Yet each of these men has a moral nature, each is to pass away from the world. What is their happiness, what is their support; what is their hope for the future? The fabled immortal with a vulture perpetually preying upon his vitals, but faintly pictures the misery of such a man.

But we see men triumphant in the hour of mortal combat. There are those over whom adversity has spread her sable cloud, and who are yet rejoicing in an unobscured hope. From scenes of deepest wo are often gathered our most exalted views of human character. There are found those, whom earthly calamity has raised to a nearer resemblance to angelic virtue. The storm has beat heavily upon them, but they have had an anchor to their souls. No murmur escapes from them, no misanthropy has chilled their warm sensibilities. There are no corrodings of envy or of distrust wearing out their spirits. They are inspired by love, by gratitude and confidence. They stray not into forbidden paths; but hold fast their integrity and will not let it go. They drown not their sensibilities by sinking the man into the brute. They rise in dignity as the pressure bears more heavily upon them. They look forward, and as the inheritance which their faith reveals is brought into nearer view, they 'rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' These are the happy men whom Jesus has reached by his holy and compassionate influence. O! who can look upon them and not bless the messenger of God's mercy.

My friends, will you reject this compassionate Saviour? Then you do not and cannot suspend the operations of God's eternal laws. The miseries of guilt will still remain, and you in your madness reject the mercy, which is offered to strengthen you in your weakness and to guard you from wo. You diminish not at all the miseries of guilt, but give yourselves to wretchedness, by throwing away the instruments of your virtue and the means of your happiness. You will not do this,

you cannot as rational beings be guilty of folly so desperate. Then you will receive the Saviour of your souls. You will repair to him for strength, for light, for virtue, for peace, for salvation; 'for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.' Amen.

SERMON III.

BY REV. THOMAS B. FOX,
OF NEWBURYPORT, MASS.

THE USE OF LIFE.

1 THESSALONIANS V. 19.
QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT.

It is, I think, a truth warranted by revelation and confirmed by reason, — and if so, it is certainly a delightful truth, — that God, so far as the free agency of man will permit, is constantly endeavoring to lead us in the way of goodness and peace to our highest happiness. Whatever may be the situation in which we are placed, whatever may be our age in life, whatever the character of the circumstances by which we are surrounded, unless we thwart the purposes of Providence by our sins and follies, they are all adapted in the best possible manner to promote our highest possible good. All things work together for good to the right-minded man. To him there are no unlucky and adverse events. An improving influence comes to his soul from every thing around him. To him there is instruction every where. His soul, so to speak, is in a listening attitude, and hears on all sides the sweet voice of the spirit of God calling it to joy 'unspeakable and full of glory.' The heavens and the earth, the ma-

terial and the moral worlds, are teeming with beauty and knowledge and truth, by which he is continually profiting and growing wiser and better.

But the class to which such a right-minded man belongs is small. Most men live on and live on without any true and definite purpose; at least, without any purpose which can be called true or definite, when their nature and destiny are rightly understood; without any purpose which can be called true or definite, when referred to an immortal being. They live all for earth, and many even for the worst and meanest of earth's trifles. Look around you, and see how many pass from day to day, toiling merely to add a little more to their money, or to drink once more from the cup of pleasure, or to gain a little more influence and govern a little longer poor worms like themselves; see how many there are who do this, who forget the real design of life, who go to the grave, who enter upon a limitless futurity and the presence of a God of whose existence they have scarcely thought, and never practically acknowledged. Such is the melancholy forgetfulness, on the part of many, of that which it most becomes them to remember; such their deafness to the teachings of the spirit of God.

And, I suppose, my hearers, that some of us,—I hope not many—if we answer not to the extreme case, which I have stated, are yet living without making that holy use of life and its events which we ought to make. I suppose that some of us are busy day after day on our farms, in our workshops, in our counting-houses and dwellings, about our earthly concerns, without remembering that we are continually fitting or unfitting our souls for eternity. Is it not so? Let us look back upon our past

lives, let us look upon the past week—upon its yesterdays; how have we been employed? How often have we thought of God? How often have we recognized the great fact, that the duties we have been performing, the relations we have been sustaining, the business in which we have been engaged, aye the very recreations which we have been enjoying, were all ordained by Providence to assist in preparing us for eternity? On the contrary, how often have we thought of getting rich and established; or sought by vain employments to give speed to the lazy hours; or how have we lived without any fixed purpose, and been moved to and fro by the mere influence of circumstances! Can we thus scrutinize ourselves—here—here, in the presence of God, and not feel guilty? Surely not; unless conscience is benumbed within us, and worldliness hath frozen over our souls. Therefore I come to deepen this sense of guilt, and most solemnly to assure you, that in as much as we have not made all things minister to our advancement in goodness and piety, we have been quenching the spirit of God, that spirit which every where and in every thing calls upon us to be good. Therefore I come to illustrate the words of Paul, so that we may go hence knowing where to look for the instructions of the spirit, and more willing to obey them. I shall suppose that we are instructed by the text to ascertain what the providence of God, the works of nature, the events of life, and the scriptures teach us is the design of our being, and what use is to be made of the present state of existence.

First, they teach us that we live for some purpose. All around bears evidence of a great and mighty design.

There is some end, some stupendous consummation, to which all things are tending. Small must be the wisdom, and little the observation, of the man who does not see this. The earth would not have been spread out, the heavens would not have been unrolled, the nice machinery of social life would not have been established, and there would never have been such a constant action and reaction between the world without and the spirit within us, unless the Almighty had some glorious purpose in view. And I marvel men do not oftener think of this. Here they are, surrounded by wonders, themselves the greatest wonder of all; here they are, met on every side by the miracles of creation; here they are, a part of a universe, knowing that there must be a God and that they must bear some relation to that God; and yet, how strange! they pass on from day to day almost without asking themselves what all this means. For most certainly, if they did, if they realized that there were every where marks of some magnificent design, there would not be so much superficial skepticism, there would be an end to this all-pervading thoughtlessness, this all-absorbing devotion to that which is fleeting and bodiless as a shadow.

But, be it or not acknowledged by man, there is a purpose in his being. The readiness there is to receive him, the provision for his comfort when he is born, the whole process of his growth, the necessities which he is under, the relations in which he stands, all show that some design is to be answered by his creation. Consequently it becomes an important question for him to settle, what this design is. And this, in the second place, the spirit teaches us to be *the education of our*

souls, the improvement of our moral and intellectual natures, in more simple words, the making of ourselves wiser and better. For this obvious but glorious purpose were we brought into being. As God plants the tree, sends down its roots into the sustaining and nourishing earth, pours out upon it his fertilizing showers, and sheds upon it the wármth of the life-giving sun, that as a tree it may grow to its perfection; so has He made the human soul but little lower than angelic spirits, placed it in this state of trial and discipline, surrounded it by so many things to call forth all its powers, capacities and affections, and shed upon it the holy light of revelation, that as a soul, an intelligent and immortal spirit, it may grow to its perfection. It is then, I repeat—and I cannot repeat it too often, for I would have all feel and acknowledge it — it is the end of our being, that we should continually become wiser and better. To this should every thing we say or do be referred. And to prove this truth, we need not the voice of inspiration. It is proved daily and hourly to every observing man; for every day and hour tells us that in this changing world there is nothing permanent but mind, that the only lasting effect of all that happens or is done is its effect upon the soul, its effect in elevating or debasing our natures.

This may be easily illustrated. Take the case of a merchant. He is successful in business; his warehouse is full; his voyages are prosperous; he has been ever active and diligent in business, and he has accumulated a handsome property. In our land there are many such merchants. And provided things be seen in a true light, there can be few conditions more desirable. Yet of this happy condition it is true, that

all that is or can be permanent, all that (comparatively speaking) is worthy a man's serious thought, is the effect of his mercantile life upon his soul. If it hath not strengthened his intellect, improved his heart, made him a more holy and religious man, if it hath not given him such an interest in mankind as to make him generous and truly and habitually benevolent, it has all been vain, though he number thousands upon thousands. And if you will reflect, you will see that it has been so. Because his property must leave him, or he must leave his property, soon —no man can tell how soon. His connexion with it is only temporary. The acquisition of it and the possession of it are only means which God has given him for his spiritual improvement. And if he has not used them as such, there will be sorrow to his soul; for they are of no avail to any other purpose.—Yet how many there are engaged in active business, who do not think of this; nay, who, so far from thinking of this, are constantly giving those very mercantile engagements, which were meant to aid them in the care of their souls, as an excuse for not attending to their eternal interests. How many there are, in some instances even advanced in life, who talk and act about earthly concerns just as if they were all in all and were not to be left in a few years for ever. Thus do they disobey the Apostle's injunction, thus do they quench the spirit of God.

Again, take another case;—a family circle—all that is so interesting in a home. There is the love of the parent, the filial affection of the child, the mutual confidence, the reciprocal influence of matured knowledge and early innocence; there is all that gives play to the

tenderest feelings of the heart. Now to what purpose is all this? Why, think you, did God so order things? Why are there husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, children and brothers and sisters? For what purpose these family circles, which are in every dwelling? Are their effects confined to earth? Look into the history of one of these circles, trace it a little way down the vale of time,—where is it? The grave hath long closed over some members of it; others are far, far away; it has been all broken up, and as a family circle it hath neither name nor place upon earth. Is there nothing of it remaining? Yes; there remaineth, and there ever will remain, the effect on the hearts and minds of its members, produced by their dwelling together. If that effect then be not holy, if it have not done something to purify and strengthen the affections for heaven, in that family circle the spirit of God hath been quenched.

I might adduce more illustrations to show you that the effect on our souls is the only permanent effect of all that happens. But these two are sufficient. To what important conclusion then does this view bring us? Even to this; that life, with all its events and relations, is to be used with constant reference to our spiritual welfare. Are we placed among the rich beauties of nature; do we gaze, for instance, on the western sky, when the sun is descending in glory and all things are bathed in his golden light; do we dwell upon the green field; or study the mysteries of the modest flower; or look out upon the beautiful night? We should so gaze and dwell and study, that the holy influences of nature,

telling of the power and goodness of God, may be felt by our souls and soften them in pious gratitude. Are we prospered in our business, and becoming rich and influential? Then should we so use our riches and influence as best to promote the great cause of human improvement. It should be our constant study, how we can do good with our money and power, in what way we can make men better and happier. This should be the purpose of our acts, that our prosperity may make us righteous and benevolent, as Providence intends it should. Are we afflicted; gaze we upon the fresh grave of some loved friend, some dear child? Then should we long gaze upon it, should learn the solemn lesson it gives, until we can never forget that our friend or child hath preceded us but a little while in his departure to another world; until we are taught by it so to 'number our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom.' Or are we otherwise afflicted; are our eyes met day after day by a sadder sight than the grave, by the ravages which sin is making upon the character of some one who is near and dear to us? We should be so affected by it as to hold still closer our own integrity, and not let the strength of religion be wanting to sustain us. Are there hours — such hours I know come to some, I believe they come to all — are there hours, when earth is shut out, when the spirit goes onward to another world, when the solemn fact is felt that earth's ties must be separated, earth's joys fade away, and kindred and friends part to meet no more till they meet beyond the grave? Oh! let such hours be cherished. They are blessed moments to the soul, and should be used to interest it more and more deeply in the ever-

lasting realities of existence. They are hours when we get glimpses of the spirit-land. This is the way life should be used.

My hearers, you should thus use it. The truths I have been stating are not abstract. They have a meaning for all of you. You are all of you living. Tomorrow will see you returning to the active business of life. Tomorrow you will be passing one another in the streets, and your friendly greetings will be followed by the making of bargains and the other common transactions of the week. Tomorrow, and at all times, will you be engaged in those things which must be either used or abused by you, which must improve or debase your souls. Should I not be false then to my duty, did I not endeavor to make you feel the great truth I have been urging? My friends, we are in a serious place, we are about solemn things. Do not then let us trifle. If there be a God and an eternity, if we are immortal, do not let us trifle. Let us not go hence as indifferent to religion as we may have been.

My friend, art thou young — full of bright hope and lofty expectation? Doth life seem all a fairy land, covered with fresh verdure, lit by a golden light and crowded with a sweet perfume? The spirit of God speaks to thee. It speaks in the history of human nature, in the ruins of confident hopes, in the sad disasters, the broken careers, the baffled projects, the weary and sad hours of millions, who have trod earth's pilgrimage before thee. It speaks to awaken thee from thy dreams, to call thy young affections, thy vigorous thoughts, thy warm desires, to the contemplation of the beauty of holiness — the power of religion — the bliss of heaven!

My friend, art thou old? Dost thou look back upon a weary life of change? Are the friends of thy youth gone? Is thy step feeble, thine eye dim, thy body weakened? Art thou almost ready to exclaim, all is vanity? Well then, the spirit of God speaks to thee. It speaks in the events of threescore years and ten. It tells you that the fashion of earth passes away. It points to your opening grave, and bids you think of a better world and prepare your soul for its Maker's presence.

My friend, art thou a parent? Hast thou a parent's hopes, a parent's fears? Desirest thou the welfare of thy offspring? Oh! how solemnly speaks the spirit of God to thee. It speaks in that little band of immortal souls around you. It tells you how by every careless word, by every irreligious act, by the worldliness of your life, you are perhaps bringing on to them destruction terrible as it is sure. It bids you think as a *father* should think, fear as a *mother* should fear; and to remember God hath no retribution more fearful than that laid up for a faithless parent.

My friend, art thou a man? Hast thou an immortal soul? Does thy heart never beat against the sides of its prison house, that its longing desires may be released? Is thy mind never moved by quick-stirring thought? Art thou pressing ever onward and onward? Art thou conscious of thy powers? Wouldst thou exercise them to the full? Knowest thou that thy capacities are boundless, and wouldst thou satisfy them? The spirit of God speaks to thee. It bids thee fill thy hungry soul with heaven's truth, warm thy affections

into an everlasting love of holiness, and busy thy mind in making all things work together for good. Thus speaks, thus burns, the spirit of God. And now wilt thou, youth — and thou, age — and thou, father—and thou, mother—and thou, man—wilt thou quench the spirit of God?

charge of these or those duties; and if this be the case, it may be asked, how can religion be esteemed as a private concern between God and our own souls. To this we reply, that the conversation and works of good men are no more than the action of the mind and will by which they are moved. *That* mind and will are their essential religion, and the word and work which spring from it are only the expression and the action of the spirit or principle of religion in the soul. And inasmuch as a good or holy spirit in the heart always does exert itself in good words and good works, therefore these good words and works are spoken of as one with religion. Light always shines when the sun is up in the heavens, and we speak of light or of a bright sun as the same thing, in common expression, and yet it is manifest that if there were no sun there would be no light. So the Scripture makes mention of good words and good works as one with religion, and yet it seems very plain that without a heavenly spirit predominating in the affections man can utter no sincerely heavenly conversation or produce heavenly works. That man may utter many speeches and do many deeds useful to society from other motives than religious principles and affections, can scarcely be doubted. There are so many external motives to do good acting upon the mind, that it cannot well be otherwise. But God searches the heart, and his judgment of the man, we believe, is always decided according to the prevailing principle and ruling affection of the soul—the predominant spirit of the mind. And while this prevailing spirit establishes the man either for heaven or hell, then shall he receive more or less reward or punishment, according to the

amount of the good or evil conversation and works which he brings to pass through his ruling principle and affections.

These observations may serve to explain what we mean by affirming, that religion is essentially a personal concern between God and our own souls, and that we have no further part or lot in the experience, benefit or promise of religion than as we, each in himself, imbibe as our own the spirit of Christ and bring it into action in our own lives and conversation. This general proposition we propose to illustrate by bringing to view several particulars, and in this course observe,

1. That religion is each one's personal concern, because no man can *enter into the presence of God* for and instead of another. To exercise a spiritual access to God is the first requisite of all piety. It is absurd to think of loving a being of whose presence we have no heartfelt discernment, and without the love of God there is no religion. For God is love, and he only that loveth 'dwelleth in God and God in him.' Hence the first call of the Scriptures to sinners is, that they repent and turn to God; that they seek the face of the Most High; that they return unto him against whom they have deeply revolted; and in the general sense that they come home to the Almighty, and pour out their hearts before him like water. Indeed we do not see how any man can obtain the pardon of his sins, till he repent and seek forgiveness of God; nor how he can obtain a union with Christ Jesus, till he seek of God this his unspeakable gift; nor how in any way he can be reconciled to God, till he lay himself submissively and penitently before his Maker, and resign himself to the sove-

reign disposal of the great King. But doing all this supposes that he approaches the Almighty himself, in the sincere feelings of his heart, and worships in spirit and in truth. This approach to God we must make each in our own proper person. It is impossible in the nature of things that another can do it in our stead. We may have many helps in this affair; and blessed be God, that he gives us so many. Our Christian friends may often lead us towards the Most High, by bearing witness of the consolations which they have experienced when approaching a prayer-hearing God, and by those instructions, which shall encourage us to break through the surrounding clouds and darkness and enter with hope into the pavilion of the Deity; and they may help us by praying with us, thereby exalting our affections and leading our hearts with them to God. Helps of this kind may also be derived from the writings and lives of the saints of old, which all encourage our spiritual approaches to the Almighty. And the greatest of all aids is the Lord Jesus Christ, who teaches such truths, exhibits such an example, manifests such a state of the affections towards God, and becomes so powerful in mediation, that man, who will draw near and attach himself to him, may come with confidence to the throne of mercy and find grace to help in every time of need, being led and aided to the Deity by the one living Mediator between God and man. But after all that is said concerning the everlasting priesthood of Christ, and with all the joyful consolations that result from our consciousness of a living mediator, still this one thought is left the same, and appears looking out from under all the scriptural ex-

pressions,—that man must approach the Deity for himself; each one must come before God in his own proper person, to be searched, examined and tried, and make his own individual submission. Christ hath consecrated a new way of approaching the Deity, but it is a way by which we must go unto God ourselves; and hence the force of the Apostle's exhortation, when he saith; 'Having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart and the full assurance of faith.' And this drawing near to God must be a spiritual approach effected in each one's own mind, the individual work of the individual soul.

2. That religion is each one's individual concern, appears from this, that no one can be *judged* in place of another. 'We,' saith the Apostle, 'we shall, every one of us, give an account of himself to God.' Of the mode and form of that judgment which human souls shall pass through at their resurrection, we do not now enter into discussion. Suffice it to say, that there is a tremendous trial to be gone through, in which God will search the thoughts and the affections of the heart, bring to light every secret thing, strip away every covering and every subterfuge, and bring forth every individual soul in its true, undisguised condition, to render a judgment without respect of persons—a judgment founded upon sincere spiritual character, and not on the sight of the eye or the hearing of the ear. Such a trial as this must in its very nature be personal. It is impossible that any one else can answer in our stead,— can place his soul before the judgment seat of Christ in room of our own, or receive our recompense in happiness or misery. No man shall deliver even his

brother. And inasmuch as this trial must be passed by every one in his own person, it of course becomes the personal concern of every soul to be provided with his own proper defence at the bar of God.

3. Religion is our personal concern, because no man can *believe* for and in place of another. When contemplating the trial and future state of the soul in another world, we all feel so conscious of sin and so deeply condemned, that our first inquiry is, 'What shall we do to be saved?' and the only satisfactory answer we can get is this, that ye 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.' And what is faith in him, unless it be a cordial acceptance of him as the anointed of God, and an attaching of ourselves to him in spirit, in fates and fortunes, for time and for eternity? But this faith supposes that we have clear spiritual views of his person, his characters and offices, and a decided choice in the soul to be his both now and forever, in the sight of God and man. Now it is clearly impossible for any of us to see Jesus by another's eye, to choose him with another's will, or love him with another's affections. My brother or my friend may, by divine grace, afford essential aid to enlighten my mind by setting his own views of Christ Jesus before me, but they are no views for me to rest upon, till I embrace them myself in sincere belief. He may do much to persuade my heart and lead my affections towards the Redeemer, but till my heart itself moves to the Redeemer and my affections adhere to him, till then, I have nothing which attaches me to him; until I do this, it is still no more than my brother or my friend who sees the new heavens and the new earth, and dwells there in his spirit. But

I have no citizenship there, till my own mind perceives and my own heart loves and embraces the Son of man; as it is written, 'Hast thou faith? have it to thyself, before God.'

4. Religion is a personal concern, because no man can *exercise the holy spirit of Christ Jesus* for another. Heavenly dispositions form the spirit of Christ. Dispositions to worship God, to serve God, to submit to God, to forgive man, to bestow benefits upon man, both natural, moral and spiritual, to discharge the duties of the social and domestic relations, dispositions to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly before the Lord our God, and dispositions to maintain oneself holy, harmless and undefiled,—these form the spirit of Christ. But dispositions are in their very nature personal. Man may be moved by external impulses sometimes to worship God, and sometimes to act justly, and sometimes to be merciful; and he is moved to these, perhaps, by sympathy with good men as much as by any other outward cause. But if all those things which move him thus are external—come from others, then he has no root in himself. Separate him from those outward things which excite him now to serve and enjoy God, and you leave him nothing abiding in himself, to induce him to execute moral goodness or seek and worship God in holy joy. This is he meant by the stony ground, in whom a powerful sun may cause good seed to spring up quickly on certain occasions, but the root not penetrating it has no nourishment from the heart and it withers away. Whereas dispositions established in ourselves are always vigorous; they produce spontaneously the fair blossoms of good professions, and the

rich fruit of love, worship, righteousness, peace and joy. Dispositions merely affixed to the outside of the man perish as soon as the affixing cause is removed; but dispositions rooted in the individual soul live by the grace of God, though deprived of all external nourishment. 'Although the fig tree cease to blossom, and fruit fall untimely from the vine, the labor of the olive fail, and the field yield no meat, the flock be cut off from the fold, and no herd be left in the stall'; still the man established in holy dispositions, the spirit of Christ, shall be moving heavenward, though he goes alone, to 'rejoice in the Lord and joy in the God of his salvation.' When every outward blessing vanishes away, his heaven-directed heart will love and worship God for himself alone. But the spirit of the whole must be in his own soul, and not in that of another. It matters but little in this respect, how good or holy the hearts may be of our associates, or friends, how intimate is their acquaintance, or how close their union with the Lord; still the truth stands prominent, 'If any man have not in himself the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'

5. Religion is a personal concern, because no man can *discharge the duties or fulfil the works* of another. The steady discharge of duty is an important part of the Christian's pilgrimage through the earth. An active course of religious services, piety, beneficence and moral virtue, 'patient continuance in well doing,' is the line marked out in which the Christian must confirm his faith, serve his Master, and send up his alms as well as his prayers for a memorial before God. But this course of duty requires many sacrifices of personal

ease, interest, ambition and worldly pursuit, and it requires the activity of a mind, strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Now to imagine that man can recline upon the bed of ease, or tread a primrose path, employing another to discharge his duties, or bear his cross; and yet himself receive the recompense, were to suppose that God seeth as man seeth,—that he respecteth persons, and will receive equivalents in exchange for the soul. It were to imagine that heaven is like earth; and that the kingdom of Christ is a region of idleness, in which he is the happiest, who works the least—a thought which needs, we trust, nothing more than to be barely mentioned. Our text, in common with other scriptures, teaches a very different doctrine; that God will recompense every man, according as his own work shall be, and not as that of another, whether it be good, or whether it be evil,—without respect of persons,—with equal impartiality to the elected Jew, and to the rejected Gentile. Therefore, 'let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another; for every man shall bear his own burden.'

In this view of our subject, allow me to say,

If religion be a personal concern, then let none of us expect salvation, without possessing a spiritual citizenship in the kingdom of Christ, a personal experience of the spirit and power of godliness. Expect nothing by another's state in the sight of God, or by another's doings. Perhaps this caution may be deemed superfluous by many; yet the human heart is so deceitful, that we are prone unconsciously to rely upon some adventitious

circumstance—something which has been done for us in times past, or something that is now doing; and so to hope for heaven deceitfully, trusting in man. Like as when the Jews expected to be saved, because they 'had Abraham to their father.' Every confidence of this sort is altogether unworthy a soul created of God, and is a confidence which will surely fail when we stand before his throne. Carry it there now and examine it in the light of God; and if that light prove a consuming fire, let it burn up the false dependence of the heart, and leave us nothing to trust in but God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The eternal God is thy refuge, —be satisfied with no other.

If religion be a personal concern, then let us little regard what man can do to forbid our approaches to God or impede our progress in the way of Christ. Man may oppose, threaten, deceive or deride, if he will, for a little while; but will he stand by us at the judgment seat, to defend us from the wrath of God? or will he answer in our behalf, when the Most High shall say, 'I have called and ye refused, and wherefore when I called was there none to answer?' Man may allure, delude or terrify; but will he dare expose himself to the wrath of God to save us from it, or can he force the gate of heaven to admit us therein? Nay, man may gather all his powers of deceit, falsehood, terror, persecution, reproach or scorn; but it is altogether out of his power, to hinder the approach of the decided heart to God, or the progress of the determined disciple in the way of the Lord. 'Who therefore art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of man that shall die, or of the son of man that shall be made as grass, and forgettest the

Lord thy Maker,' who is the comforter and the sustainer of his people?

If religion be a personal concern, let us make it so ourselves, with prompt decision, and keep it so with steady uniformity. 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,' taking this for consolation, that 'it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do.' Draw near therefore to God, each for himself, in the unwavering spirit of the mind, and make him your refuge, in the submission of penitence. Come frequently before his throne, with all your spiritual concerns, that when he appears as a judge, you may discern the same one whose mercy you have often sought and often experienced, and so have confidence and hope in death and judgment. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, attach yourselves to him, and make it your highest endeavor to be always found in spiritual union with him, that he may say to you as he did to his disciples of old, 'The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.' Seek holiness in the soul as your richest treasure, and offer your works whether of piety or of charity, with confidence to God in the name of Jesus Christ. And if man by his example, by his sophisms, by threats, or deceptions, would thrust or allure you from the way of life, nay, if the world leave you altogether alone, still trust in him, who is able to bear us through, and by whose inspiration it is written to every one, 'If thou art wise, thou art wise to thyself, and if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.' Amen.

SERMON V.

BY REV. EZRA S. GOODWIN,
OF SANDWICH, MASS.

NO REST ON EARTH.

MICAH II. 10.

THIS IS NOT YOUR REST.

In discoursing from these words, we remark,

In the first place, that the human soul needs a rest. The heart requires some fixed point of repose, some one thing to which under all trials and in the pressure of all calamities we may always settle, and find support and satisfaction. This rest must be something fixed before the eye of the mind, something towards which the affections are uniformly directed, something sure and unfailing, which always remains the same, a centre of attraction round which the soul may revolve, as it is impelled by various moving causes, but towards which the soul so steadily gravitates, that unto this one central point it is always disposed to return, and unto this it will finally return, when other objects cease to act upon it, or when their influence is overcome. Further, the point of the soul's repose must be something established in a choice. It must be something which we discern

clearly in the mind, choose, resolve upon, place confidence in, and determine to follow at all events. It is a citizenship of the mind, a home, a spiritual dwelling place, in which we lay up our treasures, consecrate our affections, and erect our hopes,—the strong city of the heart.

Now the proposition we advance is this, that the human soul requires such a rest.—Without it man has no character, no fixed principle, by which to govern his life or his affections. He is the mere creature of the time being, the creature of present circumstances or of his own present whims, a wandering, vacillating and slippery soul, on whom no man can place dependence, and who can place no dependence on himself. There must be a point of satisfaction in the heart, before there can be any established 'path for the feet to walk in.' There must be some anchoring ground for the soul, if it will not be driven hither and thither by every wind. Without some fixed rest man has no solid happiness; all the pleasures he can enjoy must be found in temporary expedients, in temporary excitements, and these renewed from hour to hour, as his temporary feelings prompt; and so he is apt to rove from one scene of excitement to another, to quell his present uneasiness, and gain a temporary respite from his vague and disquieted thoughts. Without a rest man is a houseless pilgrim, a wanderer on a wild waste, exposed to all causes of disquietude, and without a resource for healing or safety. It is, because the human mind is so made that it requires and needs a rest, as truly as our bodily natures

require a dwelling place to afford us shade from the heat and shelter from the storm.

We remark secondly, that man is exceedingly prone to seek and expect to find a point of repose for the soul somewhere on earth. This world, as well as all others, is the work of God, and in all the works of God there is much goodness, much beauty and much attractive influence. The consequence is, that among the things of earth the heart sees much to love, much to desire, much to choose, and many things on which we imagine we may set up a rest. Hence the eagerness with which one seeks after riches, another after pleasures, another after honors, and another after a domestic establishment. And hence the intensity of the human soul in desiring one or another earthly object, or earthly state of things. It is because the heart desires rest, and hopes to find it in the possession of this or that object of love. The earliest views of the mind are confined within the bounds of the life that now is, and among the things that are seen man at first expects to find his home. Happy were it for him if this were the extent of the evil; for then he would meet indeed a desolation of soul at last, in the final loss of his earthly objects of attachment, when they shall be taken from him or he from them; but still when the trial was past, he would be free to embrace the new spiritual things of Jesus Christ. But the misfortune is, that in the corruptions which have taken place on earth the mind is apt to be corrupted itself. The consequence is, that man often seeks his rest not only among things earthly and sensual,

but sometimes in things devilish. So that while one treasures up his hopes on property, or on his friends, his parents, his brethren or his children, or on general familiar and social conditions, and looks for satisfaction in them, another sinks down to iniquitous purposes and wicked plans, to the deep corruptions of the carnal mind, and hopes to obtain his rest in the ultimate accomplishment of these. It is, because there is a disposition in man to regard as permanent the things which are present; and when he experiences the need of a rest, he is given to seek one among the persons or objects of the present world.

We remark thirdly, that the present world affords no such point of repose as the human heart requires. View the world at its best estate, and it offers many things which God has made, and made them good. It gives to many of us parents, associates, brethren,children, country and friends—objects which deserve our affection and esteem to a high degree. But do these or any of them afford a solid, and unchangeable rock for the soul to rest upon? By no means. They are all exposed to daily and painful variation; their thoughts and feelings are subject to the same changes as our own, and their breath is in their nostrils ready to be expired, as our experience of the death of parents, relatives and friends so truly proves from week to week. Place the supreme confidence of the heart in these, and the soul is every moment exposed to sudden, violent and desolating convulsions. The present fashion of this world passeth away, and its fairest grace and brightest glory perish; it affordeth no rest to

the immortal mind.—There is a better respect still in which we may regard the present life. We often lay plans for doing good, and put forth powerful efforts to do good to men in natural and in spiritual things, and think that when our plans take effect we shall rejoice and rest in peace. In this case our desire is to see the natural or spiritual state of man ameliorated in those respects to which we are directing our efforts. But even here the world affords no rest. Benefits may be offered to the necessitous through much labor and much sacrifice of our own, and these benefits may be repelled as fast as they are proffered. Instruction may be spoken to the ignorant, reproof to the vicious, and consolation to the mourner; aid may be extended to the feeble, medicine to the diseased, light to the blind, and eternal life in Jesus Christ to the dying; and yet all these things may be utterly despised and rejected of men; and of all our labor we may see no fruit, however much we may have devoted of our property, time and comforts to the cause. In the actual success of any individual efforts, even of a beneficent nature, we have no right to seek a rest on earth, for it may not please the Deity to grant an increase to our planting or watering. We must still have our foundation of repose in something higher than our success—something not of this world, or we have nothing which remains with unfailing endurance.

From these highest and best grounds of earthly hope let us come down to lower objects, and see if they afford a satisfactory promise of rest for the mind. What shall we say of property? How many have believed,

that if they could accumulate riches to a certain extent, they should then be satisfied and be at perfect peace; and yet how often does property fail of making its owners happy, and how often does it vanish from our grasp like the shadows of a dream. What shall we say of honors? The mere breath of man, which today shouts hosannas upon the favorite of the multitude, and tomorrow driven by a changing feeling cries as loudly, Away with him from the earth. What shall we say of pleasures? To these too how many souls direct their gaze, and imagine the fulness of peace to reside in this or that mode of enjoyment; and when the cup is tasted, we find that all its power was in its sparkling appearance, and in itself it is all unsavory. So deceitful is the promise and so unstable the condition of earth and its affairs, even when the possession of them may be innocent, if not praiseworthy.—Look next to that portion of the world, which if sought at all must be sought through corruption, and think you that there is any rest for the wicked soul? Suppose the purpose gained which it has followed through iniquity, and then the consciousness of sin embitters every moment's possession, and the very object so obtained 'bites like a serpent and stings like an adder.' But suppose the object lost, and then the consciousness of sin and the disappointment of hope concur to convict, judge and condemn, and maintain perpetual disquietude. 'There is no peace to the wicked.'

Look to the worst things of earth, and instead of rest, they afford no other reward than the unquenchable flame and the undying worm. Look to the best, and they may possibly lighten our little day for a little

while, but like the sparkling dewdrop they are soon exhaled, and leave the thirsty soul exposed and desolate. The soul which confines its views to earth and has no foundation of repose beyond it, shall literally go like the troubled spirit, 'seeking rest and finding none;' or at least like the light down of the thistle, whirled from object to object and finding no place for permanent abode. The true reason is that it is seeking on earth what earth does not contain, and what the Most High never intended it should. God made this world for our temporary abode, but has erected in it no mansion of abiding rest. 'Here we have no continuing city.'

We remark fourthly, that God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and he only, is the true point of repose for the mind. The world is changeable, but God is immutable. The world is corrupt, but God is pure. The world at its best estate leaves a void in the heart, but God is fulness itself. The world is weak, but God is power. The world is false, but God is true. The world is passing away, but God is from everlasting to everlasting. The world is full of follies, but God is wisdom. The world is selfish, but God is love; and he that trusteth in the Eternal shall never be ashamed. Hence it is written, 'O Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.' 'I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge, and my fortress; my God, in him will I trust.' The eternal God is the refuge of his saints, and underneath them is an everlasting arm. God in Christ Jesus has consolations for the mourner, power for the feeble, wisdom for the simple, liberty for the captive, and life for the dead, and is a safe and sure habitation to them that trust him. To God in Christ

we may safely commit our good purposes, good plans and good works, whether successful or not,—believing that he watches all these things in wisdom and kindness, and with respect not merely to any present state of affairs, but to an eternal futurity. To him we may safely commit our prospects and hopes on earth, knowing that what he effects shall issue in good, and what he disappoints shall in the end be plain to our eyes. And unto him we may look with joyful confidence when the heavens and earth are melting away. God is forever the same, and in that love of his which is Christ Jesus our Lord we have a sure rest, though friends and enemies, riches and honors, earth and sea, and every visible thing be eternally swept from our sight.

Perchance in saying these things I am speaking parables to some, but I trust in God I am uttering experienced truths to many. And here, my brethren, allow me to exhort you,

First, that you abstract your affections from the present world. Its very duration is but for a little while; its gifts and pleasures are of shorter date than itself. Lay the best plans you can for this world's goods, follow them with all care and industry, and gain the most which this world can give,—look at it in a few days, and behold it is perishing with canker, mildew and moth. Even while preparing to enjoy it, time's wasting hand is scattering it to all the winds of heaven. Accidents destroy the life, diseases waste away the frames of relatives and friends; parents fall to the grave before us like superannuated trees—brethren sink at our

side like blasted ears—the olive branches wither round our tables; our firmest plans are often counteracted, our best endeavors frustrated, and our brightest hopes extinguished in utter darkness. In such a world will ye seek a rest for your souls? As well might you call him a wise mariner, who should cast his anchor in the open sea and expect it to hold his ship in safety from the storm, though it can reach no solid ground. As well approve the conduct of him who built his house upon the sand, exposed to all the violence of wind, rain and flood. Souls! whom the Creator has made for himself, abstract your affections from a changing and perishing world, and look not for a rest where God has appointed only temporary provisions for temporary events.

Secondly, be persuaded to dissolve all plans and abjure all purposes inconsistent with true religion. Criminal purposes may promise much, but they fulfil nothing. Listen to them, and they only deceive, corrupt and destroy the soul with a sore destruction. Dear-bought experience has confirmed this truth to many minds, and proved the intense agonies by which alone a resurrection can be wrought from the death of the soul induced by trespasses and sins. Oh! that we might learn wisdom from the experience of others, and not expose ourselves to the perilous risk of separation from the God of heaven. Place no dependence on the fruits of iniquity in any shape; 'its grape is bitter as that of Sodom and its cluster as that of Gomorrha.' Sooner or later its wages are death, and wo unto him who expects to find satisfaction in any of the walks of vice. He will

bring himself at last to the state where the question shall fall upon his heart with harrowing power,—'What fruit had ye then, in those things whereof ye are now ashamed, for the end of those things is death.'

Thirdly, seek rest for the soul in God, through Jesus Christ. Here is an object which is eternal and unfailing, and deserving the confidence of every soul. 'God is love,' and 'blessed is the man who trusteth in him.' God created souls for himself, and he 'hath a desire to the work of his hands.' For this reason he will not suffer the mind to repose its ultimate confidence on anything short of himself, and for this cause, when he deprives us of earthly favors, he calls us with more emphasis to come and trust in him. Try this resource, my brethren; we shall find it a sure and lasting one. Take refuge in God; and then, when earth deceives, we shall recline in peace upon the God of truth. Then too, when earthly comforts fail, when friends and relatives go from our presence, we shall still possess a hope that shall make us fast to things eternal in the heavens. Then too, when disappointments thwart our good purposes and benevolent endeavors, we may rest upon Him who retaineth the times and seasons of success in his own hand, and may be contented to labor in our lot, believing that under the oversight of God 'he that soweth and he that reapeth' shall in the end 'rejoice together.' Take refuge in God, and we shall experience that openness of heart towards him, that expansion of mind, which will be a channel for his spiritual influence upon the soul, and when earth with all its objects shall pass away, shall have a mansion of eternal rest, whose builder

and maker is God. Look not back to the world. It is too low for an immortal mind to rest upon—too corrupt for a soul that would see God—too temporary for a being destined for eternity—too dangerous for those who must pass the spiritual judgment of God in Christ. But keep the mind steady towards 'the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity;' and then you will have a refuge and a rest which time and change can never reach. Into this rest may God of his infinite mercy bring our souls through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SERMON VI.

BY REV. THOMAS TRACY,

OF NEWBURYPORT, MASS.

STRIVING TO ENTER AT THE STRAIT GATE.

LUKE XIII. 24.

STRIVE TO ENTER IN AT THE STRAIT GATE; FOR MANY, I SAY UNTO YOU, WILL SEEK TO ENTER IN, AND SHALL NOT BE ABLE.

You hear, my friends, this command and warning of Jesus Christ; and you all acknowledge, that he never pronounced, during the whole period of his ministry, a warning or a command of more arresting power. With you I acknowledge the momentous import of these words, and I acknowledge it with fear and trembling.

Behold what your Creator has done for you. He discloses the pathway of revelation, leading up to the glory of eternal life; he discloses the pathway also forbidden by revelation, with the same certainty conducting you to the darkness of death. He makes you able to choose, and able to reach, either of these mysterious kingdoms. He commissioned the Messiah to enlighten, to encourage, and to admonish you; and the ambassadors of Christ, when they feel the difference between salvation and perdition, and when they faithfully perform their appointed duties, he sends to

you with the same light, encouragement and admonition.

'What then shall we do?' you inquire.

The divine teacher himself makes answer: Strive to gain admittance at the narrow passage of the faith of the gospel. By night and by day that holy avenue is open to your approach.

'But may we enter the gate?' you continue to ask.

If you believe, you may; you are permitted, and you are assisted, to enter. Yes, blessed be sparing mercy! you are still in the land of opportunity. However slumbering and insensible you may have been, however lethargic and dead you may now be, the voice of the Saviour is still saluting your ear. He is proposing to you this hour a momentous alternative; an alternative, on which is suspended the fate of every man, woman, and young person of this assembly. He says to you this moment: 'Will you follow me? or will you forsake and flee from me? Will you be saved or lost? Will you *strive* to enter in at the strait gate, and become inhabitants of my kingdom? Or will you remain without the gate, the hesitating friends, the lifeless advocates, the dreaming *seekers* of the kingdom? Or will you wander away with the many to the kingdom of darkness, to the wide gate and the broad way of the destroyer?' In one word, will you be loyal soldiers of the cross of him who died on Calvary, or fainthearted defenders of his holy cause, or rebels from God and righteousness? One of these three courses you must in the nature of things pursue.

My hearers! You have no time for indecision or delay; much less have you for the daring presumption of a reprobate mind. Come with me then to an exposition of this passage,—to an exposition of your state. It is not discussion merely, it is not cold speculation, to which I would call your attention, but religious improvement. Come then, heart and soul, to the developements of the strait gate,—to a consideration of the striver, the seeker, and the reprobate. Come in the fear of the Almighty. Come with the same deep impression as if you were now summoned, as you all must be, God knows how soon, to his tribunal; as if your fate were this hour to be determined, your names enrolled in the register of heaven or blotted out from the Lamb's book of life.

1. In the first place, allow me to inquire, What is your state, what is the prospect before you, in a Christian country?

Much of this chapter, immediately connected with the text, relates to the destruction of Jerusalem. This prophecy of our Lord was accomplished in the year 70 of the Christian era. But these allusions, though extremely interesting, I shall for the present omit to notice. From that unbelieving city, from that devoted metropolis and its day of visitation, I wish you to cross the ocean, and come home to the missionary ground of your own hearts. The Lord Jesus, I trust, has many souls, much people, on these borders of the Atlantic. Whatever was the doom of those twelve hundred thousand—our Saviour's contemporaries, whatever was the doom of unbelief and murder,—the extinction of their national splendor, the violent death of war, the lingering misery of dispersion, the retributive inflictions

of eternity,—these are a warning, but not a condemnation to you. Still remember, you have the same tidings of salvation proclaimed to you, which the Messiah proclaimed to them. You enjoy the same opportunity of welcome to his kingdom, which they enjoyed; and unless you enter with the most earnest sincerity, with an ardor of spirit never to be damped or subdued, your fate will resemble theirs. If not infidel opposers, you will belong to that languid and lukewarm multitude, who merely *seek* to enter in, and are not able.

Does any one indulge an imagination of this nature, 'I can be saved as well without the Saviour as with him?' I cannot believe, that any one of you cherishes this feeling. But if any such individual there be, I entreat him to dismiss a delusion and blindness so fatal. I say nothing at present of those nations who as yet are walking in darkness, what the prophet well denominates 'the region of the shadow of death;' the omniscient and impartial Being will doubtless judge them according to their circumstances. But, oh! cease not to assure yourselves, you too will be judge according to your circumstances, according to the light and knowledge, the privilege and opportunity, he places in your power. Whatever dreams you may indulge, this is your state. In a land illuminated with gospel light I know there is salvation by Jesus Christ, and I know of salvation by no other name. Do you inhabit a Christian country? Believe me, you cannot disregard the commands of Christ and still derive benefit from his mission. His words are express;—'Believe the gospel; repent of sins committed; reform; be baptized; remember me in the breaking of bread, which represents my body

broken; remember me in the pouring out of wine, which represents my blood shed for you; live that holy and blameless life, which I have lived; ever perform whatsoever I have commanded, and the glorious result shall be salvation,—you shall be saved.' (Most blessed promise!) 'Sooner shall the earth vanish like a vapor, sooner shall heaven with its infinite host pass away like a dream, than my words fail to be accomplished. The Eternal commissioned me to mankind, and the messages I bring are these: to those who are so wise as to follow me, and so faithful as to observe my requisitions, I give the peace of God and the salvation of heaven; those who refuse to follow me, who are too slothful to observe my revelations of duty, such I leave to their unhappy choice,—a life without one enduring joy, a life without one heartfelt satisfaction, a hopeless death, and the condemnation of the world to come.'

These are awful disclosures. Assure yourselves, my hearers, the Christian dispensation, sealed by the blood of its author and confirmed by his glorious resurrection, is no pastime to amuse; it is no plaything to be thrown by at will. It is either nothing, or it is everything. Life and death are resounding in its voice, its voice of music and its voice of thunder, its voice of promise and its voice of terrific alarm.

Such is your state, and such is the prospect before you, in a Christian country.

2. Listen, in the second place, to the two parts of my text, its command and its warning.

The following is the command, and as I am accustomed to view it, one of the most unequivocal and arresting of the New Testament;—the Saviour proclaims

to all who are favored with the Christian revelation, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate.' Do you understand the force of this command? Do you understand what is meant by this metaphor,—admission into the Christian kingdom? The command is of the following description. Our Lord represents the system of religion, which the Supreme Being sent him to promulgate, as an extensive empire. Into this realm of light he receives all who come with right dispositions and right views. The avenue or gate, through which he admits them, he denominates *strait* or *narrow*. He gives his gospel this epithet, partly on account of the peculiar difficulties with which his early adherents were obliged to struggle, and partly on account of the self-denial and devotion, the circumspection and watchfulness, which are indispensable in all ages.

This command, as I have said, is plain and simple, unequivocal and unambiguous. To every man in a Christian country, to every person who now hears me, the Messiah proclaims;—'Exert that powerful agency, which your Maker has communicated; put forth that strong energy to exterminate sin, which God has breathed into your soul to enable you to become a Christian. Surmount every obstacle, overcome vice in its ten thousand forms, regard all opposition with contempt, march forward with a determination not to be resisted. Proclaim to all evil and to the author of evil,—here lies my way to the kingdom of Christ, and through yonder gate of immortal life, in spite of sin and death, in spite of earth and hell, I mean to advance; by the power of the Infinite Spirit, and by the might of human resolve, I lay hold on the hope set before me.'

Such is the command of the captain of your salvation; 'strive to enter in at the strait gate.' His warning, or developement of consequences, is not less momentous. Christ proclaims to all and each of you, 'Many will seek to enter in, and will not be able.' What will prevent their being able? What will prevent their gaining admittance? Will it be God, who has prepared the mysteries of his kingdom for all that love him? God forbid the blasphemous thought! Will it be Christ, whom he commissioned to reveal those mysteries? Far from you be an imagination so unworthy, an apprehension so unfounded, a suspicion so unwarrantable! No, my friends, let such surmises perish forever. The failure will originate in a very different source, a source which ought to produce within you the deepest alarm and consternation. Listen to the awful import of these words of warning. Many will be favorably disposed toward Christianity, as most of Christendom may now be; many will form lukewarm wishes and inefficient purposes to attain to its glory, as most of you may now do; but through feebleness of faith, through faintheartedness and irresolution, through a cowardly and criminal shame, in a word, through mere drowsy 'seeking,' these many will fail of salvation. This will be, I repeat, because they are seeking the 'pearl of great price' with eyes half-closed; seeking the treasure of heaven with their hearts chained to the earth; seeking the light which came from the Eternal, and is now overflowing his creation,—where, in God's name where?—in the darkened chamber of their sloth and inactivity; seeking the harmony of the universe, such as when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for

joy, amid the dreamy slumber of sin and security. These many, I am constrained to declare, may seek in this manner to ages interminable, but never will they experience the promises of the Christian faith. No; the Christian faith will never bless such heartless pretenders. The Christian faith must be wooed to be won; and if it is worth possessing, it is worth striving for. Yes, bear witness its author and finisher! bear witness its noble army of martyrs! it is worth suffering and dying for. Have you, my hearers, the ambition to wear its crown? To secure that glorious reward, you must have the fortitude to bear its cross.

Never were truths more homefelt, more conformable to the human mind, than these doctrines of my text. I think you understand them; I persuade myself, that you feel their reasonableness. If you would derive benefit from a physician, what must you do? You must submit to the regimen he prescribes. And if you would have the Saviour and Redeemer become your Saviour and Redeemer, you must not only acknowledge him as such, but strive to conform to him as your exemplar and guide to immortality.

3. I have now unfolded the state of man, and the prospect that lies before him. I have expounded the command and the warning of Christ in the text. What shall follow? Will you contemplate your state? Will you be animated to perform the command? Will the warning voice awake you from the slumber of irresolution, the dream of mere half-persuasion?

The ways of religious wisdom are described by Solomon as 'ways of pleasantness,' and 'all her paths peace.' True; compared with the wretchedness of

vice, folly and irreligion, they merit that name in a pre-eminent degree. Still, O transgressor, let me not deceive you. Do not imagine that a feeble impulse, a passionless 'seeking,' will accomplish your spiritual renovation. Believe the word of him who cannot lie. Reforming is no amusement, no sport of a vacant hour. You find your criminal habits almost impossible to be removed. You find them stick to you like the poisoned garment, the envenomed robe, of ancient story. At first, in your earlier years of transgression, you are sensible of your criminality; but the more familiar, the more habitual, your delinquencies become, the less guilty you feel, the less aware that the eye of the All-seeing is upon you, the less impressed with the conviction, that you are perpetrating your own destruction.

Yes, I repeat the fearful fact; the transition from folly to wisdom, from indifference to engagedness, from the fatal security of unbelief and sin to the saving power of faith and holiness,—such a transition requires effort, the strong effort of body and soul. The words of the Saviour imply the necessity of such effort. To the path of Christian wisdom you must strive to be admitted; and when you are admitted, you must strive to advance. It is a life-long struggle; a struggle to overcome evil and to promote the cause of goodness, to cling for support,—not to earth or ocean, not to your farm or merchandise, not to your trade or profession, not to your domestic employments, not to any temporal pursuit or emolument whatsoever,—but, like the sinking mariner, to cling to the rock,—to cling to the Rock of ages, and trample under foot the power of sin. But do not tremble, do not be disheartened. The word of

Omnipotence is pledged to support the cause of righteousness. Would you embrace the doctrines of the gospel? Would you attain to the promise of the strait gate? Only be true to yourself. Only be true to your own convictions. With what view did your Master impress the command of the text? Was it because himself, was it because the Father who sent him, would be affected by your giving glory to God—by your trial, your powerful exertion, your perseverance to the end? Oh no. The cause was immeasurably distant from these. Your own individual advantage was his earnest desire,—the elevation of your principles, the ennobling of your character, the production of your purest enjoyment. The cause of heaven and the cause of human happiness are the same cause.

If therefore, in conclusion, these views be accurate, which I have been unfolding,—views of the striver, the seeker, and the reprobate, views of heavenly promise and awful warning,—you know your state, and perceive the course it requires you to pursue. The reprobate must reform, or perish amid his crimes. The seeker must do more than *seek*; he must *strive*, or perish in his timidity and irresolution. The striver must advance, in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the full size of the stature of Christ; that is, he must attain to the perfection of a Christian.

Thus you perceive, my hearers, that, disguise the truth from your consciences as you will, the alternative is of importance altogether unimaginable, whether you will follow or forsake your divine exemplar;—whether you will strive to enter in at the strait gate, and become

naturalized in his empire; whether you will remain unadmitted, as so many have hitherto done, the wavering friends, the inanimate defenders, the dreaming seekers of the kingdom; or whether you will wander away with the many to the kingdom of darkness, to the wide gate and broad way of the destroyer;—in one word, whether you are saved in heaven or lost in hell.

One word more is all I deem it needful to add. Though imprisoned by sin, you are as yet, I trust, 'prisoners of hope.' How much you may cherish of reasonable expectation, is known to God alone; but no one, I trust, has sunk beyond the reach of human hope. What, then, do you mean to do? Do you mean to perish? Then I need not designate your course. You will continue to linger and hesitate, to hesitate and linger from season to season. Too insincere or irresolute to be saved, and yet shuddering at the thought of being lost, you will sit down inactive and slumbering outside of the gate. This is the way to *seek* to enter in and to perish in the misery of disappointment, perish in the ruin of baseless and infatuated hope.

On the other hand, do you mean to secure salvation? O then awake this hour. Now commence the work. This moment arise from the dead. Strive for admittance to your Master's kingdom. Do not seek merely, but use the energy which the Almighty has given you, and supplicate for more. If 'from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force', discover yourselves the same impassioned ardor. Strong in the might of the Most High, seize the gate in the name of the Son of God; and if to your first effort, even if to

your repeated effort, it refuse to yield, imitate Samson at midnight grasping the gates of Gaza ; lift it triumphant before you, or dash all obstruction to the ground, and enter in to the joy of your Lord. This is *striving* to enter ; and, blessed be God! this is *entering* the Christian kingdom. Behold, for all who thus strive, for all who thus enter, is prepared a crown of glory,—a crown which will grow greener and greener in the ages of eternity. Amen.

SERMON VII

BY REV. JONATHAN FARR,
OF HARVARD, MASS.

DORCAS.

ACTS IX. 36.

THIS WOMAN WAS FULL OF GOOD WORKS AND ALMSDEEDS WHICH SHE DID.

But it may not be improper to give here a more particular account of this woman, so distinguished for her active benevolence. When such persons are mentioned, we naturally feel a desire to know all that can be known of them. We wish to have their name, their place, their profession; and to learn what kind of charities they bestowed. And the sacred penman, though his history of her is short, has still given us a faithful account of these particulars. She resided at Joppa; in the Syriac language, then in some use among the Jews, her name was Tabitha, but in Greek it was Dorcas. She was a disciple of Christ, that is, she was a Christian. She was liberal, or charitable. She was 'full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.' She was so from principle; she was so from habit. She was kind to the poor. She was industrious; she made the coats and garments with her own hands. She sickened and died; and weeping friends gathered around her. They sent for an Apos-

ple, and he came and raised her to life. But the story is more simple and touching as it stands in the sacred volume, and therefore we will repeat it here.

"Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds, which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick and died; whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. And for as much as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber; and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth; and kneeled down and prayed, and turning him to the body, said, Tabitha, arise! And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and lifted her up. And when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa, with one Simon a tanner."

Most people, whatever their own characters may be, like to hear of beneficent actions and persons. And still many of them neglect to read the Bible, which abounds in such relations. Nay, many treat it with contempt, though no other book in the world contains such precepts and examples of humanity and

theory. Many despise that religion which teaches us to be careful to maintain good works, and which commends in the strongest terms, and holds up for our imitation, those who are 'full of good works and almsdeeds.' But not to dwell on these things;—let us attend to some reflections which are suggested by the notice that is taken of Dorcas in the holy writings.

We are told that she was a disciple; that is, she was a Christian, a believer in Jesus. It might gratify our curiosity to be informed of the circumstances of her conversion; what was her previous character; by what steps she was led to embrace the gospel; what called up her attention to the subject of religion; who, and what means, had been instrumental in bringing her to a knowledge of her situation, and in persuading her to own and follow Christ. We should like to know the strength of her convictions—what was her religious experience—how she felt—what she said—what were her views—what awakened her heart, and what confirmed her in the faith of the Son of God. But the sacred historian passes these things over in silence. Nor is it easy to record them minutely. Some outlines, or some sketches, may be given; but after all, much must remain untold. For who shall think to give a faithful and an exact account of all the exercises of the human heart in its renovation and spiritual progress?—to write down all its motions and operations, from its first religious impressions till holy principles and habits are formed and fixed? Who shall describe all the shades of feeling, all the scenes of light and of darkness, through which it passes? Who shall recount

all the anxiety, care and doubt, all the fear, despondency and hope, which may agitate the soul that is striving to break the chains which bind it to earth, and to escape the bondage of sin and corruption? Who shall number the many conflicts which are to be endured; the many temptations to still cleave to the world; and the many resolutions to renounce it? Who shall give a true picture of all the difficulties and discouragements, which oppose one's progress; and of all his exertions to overcome them? How many serious and thoughtful seasons has he known! How often has he engaged in meditation and reflection! How often has he laid his head upon his pillow, and in silence and darkness communed with his own heart, and offered up his earnest, secret prayer to Heaven! How often has he turned his eyes back on his negligence and sins burthened with a sense of his guilt, and looked forward upon his prospects with the deepest solicitude! What trials he has known in forming his faith; what obstacles he has had to surmount in coming to the fixed resolution to delay no longer, but to give up all for Christ; to tear himself from the charms and attractions of earth, and to place his desire and hope on heaven! Who shall give a true coloring of all his sorrows during his penitence, and of all his peace and joy when 'the love of God is shed abroad in his heart,' and the Christian hope has dawned on his soul? Such things are felt and experienced, but they cannot be perfectly described.

The historian tells us the important fact, viz. that she was a disciple; but says nothing of her sighs, her tears and confessions. She may have been one of

those who had formerly been sunk in sin; and she may have been one of those who had long been waiting for the kingdom of God,—who had early followed the light that shone on her path, and was ready to receive the glad tidings as soon as they came to her ears. He does not describe the circumstances of her conversion, but makes us acquainted with the evidence and fruits of it. She 'was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.' This was her character. Her faith was active and charitable. The testimony of it was seen in her usefulness and benevolence. Her religion was a blessing to herself and to those around her.

But she fell sick and died. And her death was an affliction that was sensibly felt. In society she was a member whose loss was deeply lamented. The cause of religion and mercy would suffer by her removal. Pious souls gathered around her lifeless body. Widows who had sympathized with her in her labors of love, or who had shared in her bounty, now drew near with weeping eyes to behold the mournful scene. They learned that Peter was in a neighboring city, and two men were sent that they might more honorably and successfully urge their request, that he would come to them, and come speedily. It is uncertain whether they expected that he would restore her to life. They might only desire his presence as a comforter in the time of their trouble, and that he might direct and strengthen them in the sorrowful duties they had yet to perform. Afflictions draw kindred souls towards one another in mutual sympathies and assistance. Peter complies with their request, and immediately repairs to Joppa; enters that house of mourning, and that upper chamber

which contained the dead. What a scene! What an interview! What tokens of respect for the departed! What expressions of grief, that one who loved and clothed them was gone! What evidences were here that a worthy and valuable woman was taken away!

They begin to tell the Apostle about the virtues of the deceased. They dwell not on her views of religion, and acts of devotion, nor on her dying words. They tell not how she had felt and believed; but how she had done. They tell not how she had died, but how she had lived. They omit the particular form of her faith, and the conflicts of her last hours; and notice what had been the fruits of her faith—what had been her practice.

In all the simplicity of religion, friendship and sorrow they show the Apostle the proofs of her piety,—what she had been about. They produced some of the coats and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. Little as they may have said about her religion, the effects of it are expressed in a very significant manner. She had been filling up her days with usefulness. Here were the coats and garments she had made. Here were the testimonials of her piety and virtue. Whether she had moved in a high or an humble sphere, she had adorned it with her goodness. And whatever may have been the religion and general character of that city, there were many in it who knew, respected and esteemed her. Her influence was felt. She had been engaged in those works of liberality, which made but little show and parade, yet did much service to religion and humanity. She was a benefactor to the poor; and wrought with her own hands the

garments which covered them. She testified her sense of religious obligation by an active concern for the welfare of others. She manifested her love to Christ by imitating him in doing good.

It is pleasing to dwell on a theme like this. It holds up religion to our view in a form true and lovely; in a form the beauty of which more generally gains admiration and praise. It is profitable also to dwell on such a theme; for we do not prize the Christian virtues high enough. We are too apt to rate our own religion and that of others by feelings, faith, and acts of immediate worship; by the ardor, the number, and the length of our prayers; and by the time we devote to reading and meditation. These things will by no means be neglected by the pious soul; but they will not alone be made the standard and evidence of a gracious heart and a renewed spirit. Many wish to be more engaged in religion; but often the engagedness they think of, consists chiefly in those things which tend to separate devotion from real and practical piety. Were it not for wrong views of religion, were it not so hard to learn that God prefers mercy to sacrifice, much more of the leisure time, no doubt, of the seriously and piously disposed would be devoted to works of charity and mercy. And the sick would not then be so often without a nurse and comforter; and the poor would not so often be pinched with cold, and famished for want of bread. One much acquainted with the world has frequent occasion to make such observations.

Would it hinder your prayers, or interrupt your progress in piety, if in the spirit of your Master you were clothing and feeding the poor? Might not your devo-

tions rise to heaven while attending upon the sick and languishing? Might you not erect an altar and offer an acceptable sacrifice in the house of poverty and distress? Do you suppose that I am discouraging your attention to religion, because I recommend such expressions of it? Would it cool your fervor to have it accompanied with such duties? Would it not rather increase its warmth and secure its constancy? Such would certainly be its tendency. It would help you to preserve a devout frame, and a prayerful spirit. Many complain of the difficulty of doing this. Let them carry religion into all the business of life; and remember, that in every walk they are to follow him who went about doing good.

We do not prize the practical part of religion and the more silent and retiring virtues highly enough. Let her be assured, who is walking her narrow and silent rounds of duty from day to day; preserving order, neatness, industry and peace in her humble dwelling, sacredly regarding conjugal fidelity, contriving to nourish a large or increasing family; or making coats and garments for the naked children around her; or ministering to the sick and afflicted, seeking no witness but an approving conscience and the eye of God;—let her be assured that these are no unmeaning nor unimportant offices and marks of vital religion. And this is after all a prevailing sentiment of mankind, where they form a sober and dispassionate judgment. When a person is taken away, they estimate his worth by his virtues; not by his creed, but by his character. They dwell on the exhibitions of his piety which he had been accustomed to make. And by this same standard we are to

be judged at the last day. We want the virtues of the gospel as evidences of our faith and love.

This woman 'was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.' And there were the proofs of it around her then; loud in commending her, and in bewailing their loss. The Apostle puts them forth out of the room, as their grief might oppress and discompose his spirit; and then he kneels down and prays,—'and turning to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise! and she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.' What a change! It is observable, that our Saviour's miracles were of the benevolent kind. So also was this. By restoring and prolonging the life of Dorcas a rich blessing was conferred on the society of the believers.

As soon as she awoke from the sleep of death, he recalls her weeping friends into the chamber. How changed was the whole scene from sorrow to joy!

Behold the effects of the unostentatious and useful piety of this female, who 'was full of good works and almsdeeds.' Her death brought congenial souls together. It drew an Apostle to her city and dwelling. A miracle was wrought to revive her. This became known throughout all Joppa. It excited the attention of the people to the gospel; and the consequence was,—'many believed in the Lord;' that is, became disciples and followers of Christ. Such a favorable impression was made, so encouraging was the prospect, that the Apostle continued there many days.

Behold the influence of a single good example. Little did those around her think what a blessing she

was calling down upon the community in which she lived. Nothing is said of her learning, wealth and rank. But she had the wisdom to see the vanities of the world, and to forsake them; to know the preciousness of Christ, and to follow him. She was rich in good works, and distinguished by her generous behaviour.

Who would not, when falling sick and dying, be glad to submit to such trials under such happy and honorable circumstances? Who would not be glad to have such a virtuous name? We must all be brought ere long into a situation similar to hers in some respects. We must languish and die. And what is the name and title we would leave behind us? What will be said of us, when we are gone? Who will crowd our dying chamber to regret their loss, and to exhibit proofs that we have not lived in vain? We meditate too little on such scenes and events. If we thought of them as we should, we should be more careful to lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come. It is worth much if we can say of any one, that he died believing and penitent. But how much more is it worth, if we can say, that he 'was full of good works and almsdeeds!' Did we lay these things properly to heart, how they would remove our excuses for neglecting religion, and prompt us to the diligent and faithful discharge of its duties. How many noiseless ways should we find, in which to express our love to the Redeemer, and our regard for the welfare of our fellowmen. How little can be said of us, compared with what ought to be said, if it can be only told

that we died penitent, but that we had *lived* devoted to pleasure and sin; that all the influence of our life, except a few of the last moments of it, had been unprofitable and opposed to religion. I need not say how this neglecting religion, till we are just going out of the world, increases the danger that we shall finally die without it.

As it is the character of a pious female we have been considering, I would take occasion from it to direct the remainder of my discourse to that part of my audience, and particularly to those females who have never become disciples of Christ. And to give my exhortation more force, I will speak as though only a single one were to hear it.

You have listened to the account that has been given of this good woman. You have heard her character described. Does it not remind you of what is your own character? What a striking and sorrowful contrast! You see how she lived and died. How will your life and death compare with hers, if you die in your present condition? What have you done to honor and aid the cause of religion, and to testify your regard for the Saviour? What preparation are you making for an event so solemn and so certain as death? Reflect what you are without religion! The gospel was a great mercy to all, but peculiarly great to the female condition. It gave to woman a rank and influence in society, of which she had hitherto been deprived. Consider the ingratitude, as well as wickedness and danger, of neglecting it! What have you done for that Saviour who has done so much for you? Alas! you

are still loving the world and slighting him; deaf to his call; alive only to the things of earth. Will you continue so? O pause, and reflect. No longer turn your eyes from the cross. No longer live a stranger to God; but die now to vanity and sin, and seize before it is too late an unfading crown of glory.

SERMON VIII.

BY REV. FREDERICK A. FARLEY,
OF PROVIDENCE, R. I.

GOSPEL REQUISITIONS.

MATTHEW V. 46, 47, 48.

IF YE LOVE THEM WHICH LOVE YOU, WHAT REWARD HAVE YE? DO NOT EVEN THE PUBLICANS THE SAME? AND IF YE SALUTE YOUR BRETHREN ONLY, WHAT DO YE MORE THAN OTHERS? DO NOT EVEN THE PUBLICANS SO? BE YE THEREFORE PERFECT, EVEN AS YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN IS PERFECT.

These three verses have been placed at the head of this discourse, that the scope of our Lord's instruction herein might be the better understood. He had just before taught his hearers most remarkable doctrine,—that they must love their enemies, bless those that cursed them, return good offices for hatred, and pray for those who persecuted and injured them in any way. And the reasoning, by which so briefly, but yet so forcibly, he supports his position in the text, is based upon the very nature of his dispensation. He had come to teach no lax or commonplace morality. His disciples were to learn that more was required of them than of others. It was not sufficient to conform to what the world around them would tolerate; they were to rise above the world,—to be remarkable, to be singular, easily distinguished from other men by other modes and principles of action.

At the time when these precepts were first delivered, it may be very true, that the character to be formed by them would be more remarkable on the whole than now, for that was a particularly corrupt age. At the present day however I cannot resist the persuasion, notwithstanding the prevalence of the religion, that the truly Christian character is a very rare and remarkable thing, and I fear that the causes are to be found very much in false views of the great subject of education, and especially the education of home,—that school where the most powerful influences for good or for bad are of necessity exerted on the opening mind and heart of infant and youthful being. How often is the child or the youth expected and required to speak, to act, nay, to see, to hear, to think, to judge, precisely as his tutor, or instructer, or ordinary companions do. How often is he led to copy them not only in their dress, manners, movements even, though these in their moral connexions are no trifles, but in their language, sentiment, and general course of conduct. How often is he suffered, nay, influenced to determine what is beautiful or lovely, becoming or good, desirable or the contrary, by the mere descriptions or deportment of those around him. Perhaps a particular pattern is held up to him at various stages of his advancing life, and if he has faithfully copied that, he is led to believe that he has done all that is desired, all that is necessary. And with affections, sentiments, opinions, and actions all cast in a certain mould, he is let loose upon the world, sufficiently conformed to the society around him to pass unheeded; or possibly to be welcomed wherever a compliance with every folly of the hour, in the shape of amusement or

fashion, is the best passport to favor. Yes; and were this all, though bad enough, we might not judge the matter so very serious as it really is. The same faults of education lead to the most direct confounding of all moral distinctions. Errors of gross kinds are thus adopted and perpetuated, faults elevated into virtues, vice consented to as of course, and a most imperfect, a most unworthy standard of character set up. To be truly, Christianly virtuous, pious and good, is to be odd; is a sufficient reason for a certain degree of exclusion from society; or if not so, renders the individual with many the object of disdain or indifference, and possibly is of direct injury to his worldly fortune. Now what I wish to show is, that the Christian even in a Christian land and at the present day, is called to make a different standard of duty, and a far higher one than that of the world around him, his standard. The text is thus applicable to us, my brethren. If we would in truth and sincerity be the disciples of Jesus Christ, we are to be and to do more than others;—we are not only to differ or be distinguished from them, but this difference, this distinction, must be that which consists in our excelling them in all moral goodness. For this end the standard to which we are to aspire is the spirit of God's law, and the perfection of God's character. Let us endeavor to apply this principle to the Christian's life.

1. First then, would we be Christians indeed, we must do more for ourselves, be better men, than others who perhaps call themselves Christians do, or are. Our happiness, our improvement, our perfection of character, must be found in different sources, by different means,

and carried to a far different and loftier height. In the performance of our duties as the creatures of God we must be more faithful, more diligent, more thorough. Other men may judge many things indifferent, to be neglected or performed, to be avoided or not, as they please, which in our eyes are to be regarded as of the most solemn moment, to be done or to be shunned under the most serious considerations. We may listen to the word and will of God, to the lessons and doctrines of the gospel, and this even with approbation or satisfaction;—we may pray every day, we may assemble here every Sabbath, occasionally we may perform a good deed, our general characters may be decent and respectable even before the world, or at least never stained with any gross or heinous offence;—but is it not plain that we may be hypocrites in all this, and that the very consummateness of our art may have woven the veil under which our real characters are concealed from the face of men? More then, much more than this, must we do. We must worship God, we must do his will, we must endeavor always to please him, we must constantly strive to be wiser and better, and more effectually ensure our final salvation, because herein is the great work of life. Our religion must be with us a constant companion and guide. The presence and inspection of God must be constantly felt,—the memory and example of Jesus ever before us,—the principles and rules he unfolded and prescribed our guide in all matters of conduct, at all times, and everywhere,—the future world and our relations to it perpetually influencing our whole conduct and characters. Even now, amid the grossness of flesh and sense, our conversation

must be above; and this world must seem to us but the scene of our pilgrimage leading us onward towards a better, a heavenly country.

Thus exalted, thus elevated, is the character to which we must aspire; it is one far above that which is enough to draw after it human admiration. The cases of those who are so depraved as to neglect all their duties as men, as citizens, as parents, who are totally regardless of all right or wrong, are very rare. There are not many, who will stoop to the guilt of absolute and barefaced fraud and injustice. There are few, who would be known as liars, slanderers, revengeful, malicious men. There are few parents, who do not to some degree at least, in some sense at least, provide for their children. And most men are ready sometimes to consult the good of the community in their conduct, to attend industriously to their business, or perform the prescribed duties of the offices which they hold by the gift of their fellow men. But all this is certainly not applicable to Christians alone; it may be equally true of a Jewish, a Mahometan, or any civilized heathen community. With the thorough Christian his duty *to the fullest extent* will be sacred and inviolable: time, circumstance, temptation, could not change him in respect to it; and the opinion of the world, its approbation or its censure, would be unheeded. He will not only refrain from open lying, but from secret deceit. He will listen to the monitions of a well regulated and enlightened conscience, as to what has at least equal authority with the public laws. He will no more readily omit doing good than he will carefully avoid doing wrong, and an oath could not bind him any the more to

perform or abstain from a particular act, than the still small voice within which speaks in secret of his responsibility to God. He will do right under all circumstances; no questions of mere expediency, as it is called, no considerations as to the agreeableness or pleasure or profit or fame of a particular deed, will affect his mind or his conduct; and he will educate his children to respect not human opinion, nor the prevalent maxims, rules or principles of the world, so much as the dictates of a good conscience, the lessons of God's word, the preservation of their own innocence, and the advancement of themselves in all that is excellent and pure and holy in the life of our great Master. In fine, would we be perfect Christians,—would we as such do more than others, we must find in the will of our Creator the proper way to apply our faculties and affections; to be growing each day of our lives in all which in his sight is laudable and honorable, in all true wisdom and virtue. We must not be content with avoiding evil itself,—we must shun even its appearance. The seclusion of our most solitary hours should find us as pure as when every eye is upon us; the threatened censure of the world,—the most saddening and depressing circumstances of life, should have no power to drive us from the path which Jesus trod; and though that path conduct us to another Calvary, the terrors of that mount of blood should vanish before the energy and constancy of our moral power.

2. Again, as Christians we are to do more than others, by a wider extension of our good offices to our fellow-men, than they are accustomed to, or may think required. The man who should be so selfish as to

refuse on all occasions the least service to a fellow-creature, would be universally regarded as a shameless and hard-hearted wretch. The ordinary sympathy of human nature would drive a man occasionally to the relief of distress, to give alms to the poor and support to the weak. To return love for love, blessings for blessings, kindness for kindness, literally to reciprocate any good office if in one's power, is no part of the Christian's peculiar virtue; it is at best but decency, the commonest and most vulgar virtue, if it be virtue at all. Few men are so inexorable to the humble suitor for their forgiveness as to refuse it, and all are ready to be complaisant and courteous to those to whom they look for aid or pleasure. But, brethren, as the followers of Jesus Christ we must do more than others in all these respects. The good which we are to do to others, to the poor, the afflicted, the oppressed, the weak, is a thing of more frequent and efficient character. Charity to the poor is not the mere bestowal of what is to us a portion of our superfluity,—what neither we nor ours can use,—what possibly is an incumbrance to us. No, my brethren, it is frequently required to be a far higher and nobler gift. Our desires are to be contracted, ourselves to be denied, sacrifices of one kind or another to be made, that our ability to do good may be increased. The world may applaud him as liberal who is lavish in his expenditure, munificent in his domestic hospitality to its chosen partakers, profuse in his provisions for the comfort of those whom he is bound by every principle to provide for, and who spares nothing for the accommodation or comfort of himself and his own:—but if in doing all this he have forgotten others, if he have disa-

bled himself from doing good to others, if he have never yielded a personal comfort or pleasure or luxury, or never lessened one ostentatious and idle expense, that his hands might distribute the blessings of beneficence—the world may praise and laud him to the skies,—the religion of Jesus has no echo for such praises, but a heavy charge of deficiency and guilt.

To be Christians indeed, we must moreover learn to love our enemies, to return good for evil, and blessing for cursing. To be Christians indeed, we must forgive not merely the suppliant at our feet, but the obstinate, wilful, untouched offender ;—not merely the first injury, but repeated ones ;—not merely a slight affront, a rude expression, an ungenerous sarcasm, a harsh judgment, an incautious act of disrespect, but even serious injuries to our reputations or our property. To be Christians indeed, we must regard not only the bodily, but the spiritual wants of others, and be ready as far as in our power to enlighten their ignorance, to correct their errors, to redeem them from vice, to ease or satisfy their doubts, to help them on in the way of rectitude and the paths of true religion, that they may attain not only present but future felicity. And to be Christians indeed, all that I have now stated must be done, not merely when it will cost us no trouble, no effort, no sacrifice,—not only when we can be cheered on by the good wishes or the commendations of others ; but even, if need be, amid pain and labor, censures and reproaches, contradictions and difficulties. The situation in which we are placed may sometimes make a course of virtue the very way to encounter human passion in some of its maddest and most terrific forms. Be it so. Our

Master has gone before us. His path lay through more appalling because accumulated dangers, but he never faltered. Open and secret enemies watched and endeavored to ensnare him, but he was still firm and consistent. The multitude at one time carpeted the ground beneath his feet with their garments and with branches of the trees, and shouted Hosannas to the son of David; but the flattery of this triumphal entry to the holy city could not blind him to the sure prospect that was before him, that ere long the same voices which now hailed him as the messenger of the Most High, would rend the air with their execrations and cries for his blood! Even with this prospect he was the same, his thoughts centered not in himself; he still persevered in his efforts to enlighten and to bless all who were around him, and poured forth his soul in strains of the most touching lamentation over Jerusalem whose desolation was near. The spirit which was in Jesus must be in us, my brethren, would we be his. Let his example teach us how that spirit should be manifested.

3. We are not only as Christians to do more than others, for ourselves by perfecting our own moral and religious characters, and also for others by a wider extension of our good offices to our fellow-men, than they are accustomed to do, or to think required:—we are to do all this from better and nobler motives. It is not a servile dread of God's wrath, nor of future punishment, it is not a thirst for human applause and honor, which prompts the true disciple of Jesus Christ to do more and better than others. Nor is it a merely philosophical and refined relish for the abstract beauty or

propriety of virtue, nor a natural sensibility and uneasiness at the sight of distress, nor a mere selfish hope of reward, be it from God or man. Good may undoubtedly be done from these motives; still it is clear, that if no higher than these prompt us to do good, our virtue is nothing remarkable, nothing superior to what others who are not Christians may exhibit. Our motives, principles and views must be different. The love of God and of man,—the one leading us to serve, to obey and to adore him as our Creator and Father,—the other, to be beneficent and useful to our fellow beings, these should be our ruling motives. The desire of pleasing God and securing his approbation,—the approval of conscience,—the inward love of holiness and of perfection, these should outweigh and banish all regard to human praise or censure. Before the example of our Lord all others must seem to want interest or authority, and to be his sincere disciples must appear the amplest honor. To do right, to do well, to do the best in our power on all occasions, must be not a trouble, but a pleasure. When we give, we must give freely, not expecting a return; when we do another a service, it must not be with the view of a recompense; we must rather anticipate the opportunity to do well, than wait to be asked; we must be as happy to do so in secret as in public; and we must not suffer ourselves to grow weary in well-doing.

The rules and the measure of our virtue are to be found in the gospel, and in the ability God has given us. I would have you especially remember this, because there are many cases in which a man thinks himself justified, if he offend no human law, no civil law of the land; when the truth is, that from the ne-

cessity of the case human laws are very imperfect, both in their provisions and in their sanctions. Let no Christian think to excuse or to justify himself for an instant merely because the law of the land enacted by man does not frown upon or condemn his deed. There is a law which to him should be supreme, paramount to all other laws. That is the law of God, the law of Christ, the law of the gospel,—a law which pierces even to the thoughts and intents of the heart, and extends its jurisdiction over his most secluded hours. To this law in all its extent his most reverent attention is due: and when he has permitted it to have full sway with him, then, and not till then, will he be doing more than others, and doing it from purer and holier motives.

In conclusion, let me ask you to consider in your own hearts, 'what do ye more than others?' Are you satisfied with being guilty of no flagrant outrages against divine or human laws? with fulfilling the ordinary duties of life, without which society could not subsist? with being decent, reputable men and women? with taking care of your children's health, or educating them only with a view to worldly success? You are, then, very far from being thorough Christians! There is a God to be adored and loved,—a Saviour to be obeyed and imitated,—characters to be formed for eternity upon a spotless model,—constant advances in knowledge, in purity, in perfection to be achieved. Not a day is well spent, which does not bear witness that these pursuits of life are remembered,—no, not an hour. It is in vain, that men cannot reproach us; it is all in vain, that our deficiencies escape human observation or censure. We are to answer at last,—God alone knows how soon!—before a tribunal where human applause and

human blame are equally valueless. Our privileges as Christians are greater than theirs to whom Christianity has not come. In proportion to our privileges is our responsibleness. We must do more than others. We must be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect. It must appear that we have approached the standard as near as we could.

SERMON IX.

BY REV. SAMUEL K. LOTHROP,
OF BOSTON, MASS.

SELF-DECEPTION.

PROV. XXVIII. 13.

HE THAT COVERETH HIS SINS SHALL NOT PROSPER.

I consider the concealment of sin here spoken of as referring to self-deception rather than to any other kind of deceit. In truth this is almost the only way in which a man can cover his sins. From the eye of God of course he cannot cover them. Omniscience penetrates all that omnipotence upholds, and no darkness of midnight, no secrecy of retirement, no art of concealment can hide from God the sins of that soul which his inspiration alone endowed with the power of thought and purpose. It is seldom also that a man can cover his sins from the world. His character and conduct are always exposed to the unceasing scrutiny of that hundred-eyed Argus, public opinion. He is closely observed when he thinks himself unnoticed. Some false step, some hasty word, some momentary expression that passes like lightning over his features, will be continually revealing the secrets of his character, and laying bare to the view of others what he thought would

forever remain deep buried in the recesses of his own bosom.

But from himself a man can and often does cover his sins. He knows every thing else better than he knows his own heart. He fathoms many of the mysteries of the outward universe, but his own character remains to him a mystery, a hidden thing still. Such is sometimes his penetration, that with the eye of omniscience almost he can read, and read aright, the very souls of other men, but a veil is drawn over his own, which he can not pierce and will not raise. That little court within, by which every action, desire and purpose should be instantly tried, can be corrupted; and like a drowning man clutching a straw to save himself from destruction, conscience to save itself the unpleasant duty of remonstrance will often seize the most trivial and contemptible excuses. And of all kinds of deceit, this self-deception is the worst—the most fatal, the most injurious. We may deceive others, and do them ultimate good by the deception. We may deceive them by false professions of friendship and affection, we may engage them by flattery and falsehood in wild schemes of ambition or avarice, we may lead them on by blind paths till they totter on the brink of a precipice or fall in ruin at its base; but our hypocrisy will be to them a school of wisdom and virtue. It will teach them prudence, discretion, piety. It will teach them to trust not in an arm of flesh, and live not for the life of earth. It will lessen their confidence and wean their attachment from those hopes and joys of the world, which unsanctified by religion become vanity and vexation of spirit. It will lead them to that Being who can not be deceived, neither deceiveth he any man, and teach them to

find in the unchangeableness and truth of God a refuge and support amidst the changes, disappointments and deceit of earth. But when we deceive ourselves, when we cover our sins from our own inspection, we do it to our own injury and to no one's benefit. We build our house upon the sand, and the hopes we cherished of joy and happiness in its possession are buried in its ruins. Oh! how bitter are the miseries, how fatal are the consequences of that deception, which prevents thousands who are honest to all the world beside from being honest to themselves.

I purpose in this discourse to notice some of the ways in which men cover their sins from their own observation, and remark upon the truth of the declaration, 'whoso covereth his sins shall not prosper.'

You will all agree with me in the assertion, that the first source of our ignorance of ourselves is our inattention to ourselves; and the first way in which we cover our sins is by keeping them out of sight, by neglecting that self-study and self-examination which can alone reveal to us our true characters and instruct us in the secrets and mysteries of our mental and moral being. Every thing in the universe seems to have more interest to man than his real self,—that inward, invisible, conscious energy he calls his soul. When a man thinks of himself, his thoughts rest upon the condition and prospects of the outward, not the nature and destiny of the inward, man. His attention is directed to the wealth he possesses, and the station he occupies, and the influence he exerts, not to the virtues he has acquired, the passions he has subdued, the sins he has forsaken. His connexion with the outward visible world is so close and so important, that it continually forces itself upon

his thoughts. He overlooks his connexion, equally close and far more important, though less palpable, with the invisible; he forgets that he has within him a gem, which if polished and purified is of more worth to him than all that earth contains beside. Or if in a period of leisure he has time for meditation and retires within himself, he carries so much of the world with him that his moral vision is blinded, and the only effect of solitude is to send him back to pursue the paths of business or of pleasure with a more untiring, unreflecting eagerness. Men live without, not within themselves; they thus cover their sins by ignorance and by inattention to the motives that guide their conduct, by which the character of their actions must be determined. They often mistake the strong impulses of a secret passion for the dictates of conscience, and call an inflexible obstinacy of temper to which they are slaves a firm principle of duty. They wrap themselves in the complacent garments of humility while pride swells every fold of the sackcloth in which they fancy themselves clothed. They persuade themselves that they are following only the leadings of duty and principle, when prejudice, passion and selfishness are the secret instigators of their conduct.

Enter yonder assembly. It is a meeting of the friends of the republic. Hark to the tide of patriotism that is pouring itself forth, a full and flowing stream in 'gallant and splendid language.' He who utters it fancies himself moved only by the pure impulses of public spirit. He pourtrays the holiness of liberty, and inveighs against the sacrilege of those who profane her temple with all the enthusiasm of one who worships at her altar and drinks in her spirit. How eloquently he de-

scribes the oppression of his country's rulers, their unjust assumption and tyrannical abuse of power; with what moving appeals does he exhort his countrymen to assert their rights and preserve their liberties. Or on the other hand, how vividly does he pourtray the wisdom of the government's policy; with what lavish epithets of praise does he describe its magnanimous devotion to the people's interests, its undaunted defence of the people's rights; and how earnestly does he call upon the citizens to sustain and prolong the power of those who would protect them. Could we enter this man's heart as well as the assembly in which he is speaking, we might find perhaps that some accident of private resentment and personal pique, rather than any just sense of political duty, has placed him in the party to which he belongs, and that the moving impulse of his eloquence is a selfish ambition, checked and controlled by circumstances rather than by principle, and as unlimited and unrestrained by any regard for liberty as that which he condemns. Could we follow him to his home, we might find him the tyrant of his own hearth, and discover that while the praise of liberty and a generous regard for the happiness of others are yet warm upon his lips, the tearful eyes and care-worn cheeks and timid voices of his wife and children reproach him for haughty, overbearing and despotic manners towards the inmates of his own dwelling.

Enter yonder miserable abode of poverty and care. But yesterday its occupants were threatened with the loss even of this miserable shelter. There stands the individual who came to them on an errand of mercy. From the treasures of his abundance he relieved their necessity, and saved them from the misery of utter

ruin. His ear drinks in with delight the praises of gratitude, and while he hears himself called the friend of the injured and the protector of the oppressed he is all unconscious that personal enmity was the secret spring of his benevolence, and a desire to frustrate the designs of a rival he disliked the moving cause of his interference.

These are not exaggerated pictures. Innumerable instances daily occur, in which we thus cover our sins, by concealing from ourselves the unworthy and ungenerous, selfish and unchristian motives by which we are actuated. There is not a heart among men, nor a walk of human life, which this species of self-hypocrisy may not infest. It is the most subtle serpent of the whole race of deceivers, it can creep into every bosom and poison every action. In the markets of business and the halls of legislation, at the tribunals of justice, by the domestic fireside, and amidst the endearments of friendship, aye, and in the temple of religion and the desk of instruction, where the hands are uplifted to the very God of truth, its polluting influence may be exerted. Guard then against this way of covering sin. 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.' Let us always search to the very bottom our motives, by which the purity of our characters and the worth of our actions must be weighed. Let us see that these are right, noble, generous, Christian.

Again; many cover their sins by living too much in the opinion of others. A partial friend expresses his opinion of their characters, and they take it as correct without reflecting how poorly that friend is qualified to judge. The weapon that can most easily disarm conscience, the foe that is most fatal to self-knowledge,

is the voice of flattery with which affection and friendship speak to the soul. Much has been written and said, and with truth, about the mischief done by the tongue which speaketh evil of another, and the injury inflicted by those who give currency to scandalous accusations or insinuations respecting the character and conduct of others. Undoubtedly there is in every community a great want of that charity which thinketh no evil and speaketh no wrong; but there is also a great want of that charity which speaketh the truth,—'in love,' as the Apostle enjoins,—but in openness and firmness, as duty requires. I apprehend as much harm is done on the whole by injudicious and affectionate praise, as by indiscriminate and unjust censure. The mischief is of a different, but deeper kind. The feelings are not so much affected, but the character is more injured and its moral progress more retarded. The tongue of an enemy puts us on our guard, the soothing words of friendship lull us into neglect and self-ignorance.

I am not advocating scandal, a mischievous interference with, and tattling misrepresentation of the concerns and characters of others,—a trait of character as odious and contemptible as it is unchristian. I only say that no man's moral character was ever injured by having some one busy with his faults and imperfections. Injustice may be done him, his reputation may suffer for a time, his feelings may be wounded and his indignation aroused; but he will ultimately be made better,—more humble, circumspect, cautious. An inward scrutiny, more strict than any he ever passed upon himself before, will be instituted, and the faults for which he has heard himself censured will be corrected, if they

exist. But it is not so when the voice of partial friendship utters words of praise. There are some few indeed, who are of so timid and self-distrustful a temperament that they need the kind language of commendation to encourage and sustain their exertions; but the number of those is very small, whose minds are strong enough to resist the beguiling influence of approbation from another's lips. 'It is poison in a golden goblet;' we quaff it with eagerness, till it wraps us in the deadly sleep of self-deception. Momentary is the thought that this approbation is undeserved. Feeble is the suggestion which conscience offers. Easily and firmly established is the conviction, that our characters are as perfect, our conduct as faultless, our excellence as great, as the blind affection of others would regard them. We are willing to believe that others know us better than we know ourselves, and rest satisfied with ourselves because those who can know us but partially are satisfied with us. Of all the forms of self-deception, of all the ways in which men cover their sins, this is the most fatal, because the most pleasing and universal. Every one has some friend who extenuates his failings, excuses his defects, magnifies his abilities, and elevates the little good he does to extraordinary virtue and distinguished merit; and he who gives to these decisions of friendship more authority than to conscience is sure to cover his sins and keep himself ignorant of his true character.

Again; men cover their sins by judging of themselves by a false standard. They render an unimpeachable allegiance to public opinion, and without any very thorough inquiry into its authority or extent, are satisfied with conformity to the conventional morality which that

opinion may have established. It hardly needs illustration to satisfy us, that the man who does this must of necessity cover from himself and others many sins, and expose himself to the consequences implied in the text. Public opinion can extend its sway only to actions, and the cognizance it takes of them must be slight and variable. The morality of the multitude in every community is far from being severe, and from sympathy with each other there is ever a tendency to lower the standard. Every day's experience teaches us, that at the present time the expressions of Scripture may be applied to society with very little diminution of their original force. The way of folly and worldliness—the way of indulgence, negligence and ease is the broad way, in which the many walk; while the path of goodness, piety and truth—the path of self-denial, generous sacrifice, patient exertion and lofty virtue is the narrow path, where few footsteps are to be found. Pure Christians are still the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city set on a hill, a chosen race, a select set of men; while the multitudes around them, of all classes and conditions, are men uninfluenced by religious hopes or fears, men who are passing the maturity of manhood or wearing the hoary locks of age under the dominion of sense and the love of the world. And he who guides himself by these, he who thinks himself secure because he can bear comparison with these, is about as wise as he who should infer the constitution and course of nature from the features of some beautiful landscape, where the sunbeams were resting in glory on verdant foliage, brilliant flowers and the fruits of the ripening harvest. As beneath this scene of nature's loveliness there may

lurk elements of destruction that shall at some time burst forth with ruinous power; so beneath the moral correctness produced by public opinion in times of tranquillity there may exist, in the individual and the community, the elements of moral ruin and the secret working of passions that shall lead men to the last extremes of vice and crime; and many have found it so to their bitter cost, and have experienced in the most painful sense of the words, that the 'fashion of this world passeth away.'

This truth is written upon all the forms of beauty and loveliness nature wears, upon the works of strength and durability man erects. We see it in the faded blossom, and the withered leaf. We read it on the scattered heaps of mouldering ruins, that stand in all the nakedness of desolation on the spot where once arose in lofty grandeur the palaces of princes, the temples of religion, and the abodes of men. We feel it as we bend in sorrow over the grave, where the virtues that commanded our esteem and the gentleness that soothed our temper and the sweetness that won our hearts are reposing in the sleep of death. But there is another sense in which the fashion of this world passes away, more lamentable than this. There is a grave far more woful than that to which death conducts, an extinction far more to be dreaded than that which death produces. It is the grave to which iniquity leads, and the extinction of the light of a bright example. It is the passing away of the soul down the path of temptation to the vale of moral baseness, recklessness and sin. Of all instances of the instability of earthly things the instability of human virtue is the most mournful and humiliating;—

and who has not witnessed this? Whose experience has not made him acquainted with many an instance in which a man who seemed to stand upon the rock of truth and goodness, whose reputation had been for years established, of whom the world never whispered a syllable of suspicion, at whom it never pointed a finger of reproach, has yielded in an hour of sudden or strong temptation to the impulses of passion, and from that time gone gradually down, growing first careless, then indifferent, then reckless, then vicious and depraved in feeling, sentiment and conduct? And the cause of this? He covered his sins, by judging of himself by the world's standard. He deceived himself by taking the outward seeming for the inward power of virtue. He applied the plaster without probing the wound, and the poison rankled and diffused itself over the system till health and life were lost. He was satisfied, and the world was satisfied, with conformity to the standard the world had set up. His thoughts were not watched; the inward workings of his passions were not observed, till at last the thought of sin, which had often insinuated itself unheeded into his bosom, ripened into purpose, and the purpose into action, and he fell.

These are some of the ways in which men cover their sins and delude themselves as to their true character. They weigh not their motives; they listen to the voice of flattery; they judge by the world's standard. I need not and will not detain you long, to illustrate what the text asserts, that 'he who covereth his sins shall not prosper.' This is especially true, when we consider the text in the light in which we have regarded it, as referring to self-deception and the modes

in which men cover their sins from themselves. When we apply it to the concealment of them from others, it is not true in the absolute form of the text. It is often the case that worldly prosperity waits upon the feet of him who worketh iniquity in secret. Sometimes all that is necessary to gain the great objects of human pursuit—wealth and power, is to consent to trample honor and honesty in the dust. The Scriptures do not tell us that the righteous man shall be rich, or that the just man shall have power, but that he shall have 'that peace of God which passeth all understanding.' This is the only true prosperity; all other is often to the soul what Saul's armor was to David, a weight that drags it to the earth. As according to some naturalists the oyster dies of the disease which forms from it beautiful and magnificent pearls, so happiness dies of that moral disease which fastens the affections upon worldly objects, and offers to the languishing soul the unsatisfying possession of earth's splendor and magnificence. To have a heart right in the sight of God and to know that it is right is the only true prosperity. In this he who covereth his sins shall not succeed. He shall not prosper in that which is the only true object of life,—the formation of a Christian character and the enjoyment of Christian peace. A negligent conscience, that looks only at the part the hand is acting in the world, can not work it out. A soul that knoweth itself can alone accomplish it. As we wish for prosperity in virtue therefore, as we would that our consiences may condemn us not, so that we may have confidence toward God, let us uncover, acknowledge and forsake our sins.

SERMON X.

BY REV. WILLIAM H. FURNESS,
OF PHILADELPHIA, PENN.

THE NECESSITY OF RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE

LUKE X. 42.
ONE THING IS NEEDFUL.

It requires but a little knowledge of human nature, and but a little observation of human life, to perceive that a certain inward and controlling principle of thought and action is essential to the wellbeing—to the very existence of man, and that for the want of this principle we are either suffering or are liable to suffer incalculable evils. The manifold forms of misery which are visible in every direction, entwining themselves like so many venomous reptiles with all the relations of human life, personal, domestic and political, may be regarded by blind and unthinking superstition as the mysterious visitations of Providence, as a plague inflicted by the arbitrary will of a sovereign Power; but no one pretending in the least degree to be enlightened can fail to perceive that they are all generated here. They issue out of the unfathomed abysses of the human heart. Is disease daily numbering its victims by thousands, racking their limbs with insufferable torments, cutting them down in the bloom of life, depriving the helpless of their

protection, and the aged of their props? The mischief may all be traced to the inward state of mankind, to the violence of unregulated desires, which weaken and exhaust the physical constitution of our nature and entail an enfeebled and defective bodily organization upon generations. Is the whole world, to use the strong figure of the Apostle, groaning and travailing together in pain at the present period, waiting for the manifestation of true liberty, for the birth of holy freedom? The political evils which are grinding the nations may all be tracked to the human heart whence they swarm. How is it that here in our country, which exhibits outwardly the fairest spectacle of political prosperity upon which mortal eyes have ever looked, there is at this time a wide and overshadowing feeling of insecurity, a fearful anticipation of ills to come as painful as positive and existing distress? Whence is this state of things which needs only to be referred to? It is unnecessary to describe it. It is, I fear, the condition of the inward, invisible portion of man's nature here, which causes the political fabric to seem as frail and unsettled as if it were even now amidst blood and shouts and groans tottering to its fall. I grieve to say it, it is the unseen, universal heart of this country, swayed by selfish passions, inflamed by a low and corrupt ambition, by the greedy thirst of gain, of show and of power, which threatens like a volcano to pour forth an awful ruin. Look at the habits of thought and action which are everywhere indulged; mark the intolerance in religion and politics which will allow no private virtues to atone for a difference of opinion; contrast the high sounding language of patriotism which is upon so many lips, with that

utter unbelief as to the existence of the thing itself which regards every man as the slave of one party or another; see how it is everywhere thought, that the supreme good of existence is to abound in earthly good and to display one's possessions to the admiration and envy of society. Here, in the souls of men, actuated by sudden and selfish impulses, biassed by the most unjust modes of thought and judgment, enslaved by coarse animal passions, here are the fountains of all our political troubles, yes, and of all the evils that afflict us, of every name and variety.

I repeat therefore, what I began with observing, we want an inward and sovereign principle—a rule of thought, feeling and conduct, without which there is no calculating the sufferings we may be called to endure in our persons, in our minds, in our families, in all our relations to human society. This is the thought which I would bring home to your hearts. This is the consideration which I would have deeply impressed upon all our minds, so that we shall recur to it again and again and give ourselves no rest until we have begun to apply it thoroughly—every man to his own heart and life.

An inward principle, a fixed rule of action within to which we submit ourselves in all things—this is wanted, greatly wanted, immediately wanted. We need nothing on earth a thousandth part so much. Let any other want of your nature go unsupplied, and the evil will be limited and temporary. But fail to satisfy this want, live on without that saving principle of life to which I refer, and I speaking under the authority of reason, nature and religion forewarn you, that you must be prepared to suffer beyond all that you now conceive.

As surely as there is a God in heaven and an eternity beyond the grave, he who lives as the mere creature of caprice, the slave of the impulse of the moment, the victim of despotic worldly habits, is treasuring up for himself tribulation and anguish, and will sooner or later, here or hereafter, suffer evils at the bare view of which, could they now be distinctly revealed to him, he would call upon the rocks and mountains to fall and cover him. Oh! how careless—how dead are we to this most momentous concern! Let us only have enough to eat and to drink—let our bodily necessities be provided for, let no physical comfort be wanting,—let us only be respectable, and our conditions in life "cushioned all around,"—and we are content, content to live and to die unconscious of any higher destiny, forgetful of the deep and immortal cravings of the highest, holiest, divinest portion of our nature. Awake, offspring of God, heirs of immortality, awake from this dishonorable, this brutish insensibility! Give heed to the cries and struggles of that within you, which all the clamors of the world cannot silence, nor the heavy burthens of sense and custom crush.

I have spoken of the need of a strong, all-controlling principle. What is this inward and saving spring of action, which is so much needed for the protection of man, individually and collectively, from the most frightful evils? Shall we find it in a regard to human laws? Will he who only takes care not to offend against the institutions of civil society be safe from those dangers to which man is exposed, and to which he has so often fallen a victim? But human laws however wisely framed are necessarily limited in their operation. They take

cognizance only of the outward actions. They cannot extend their jurisdiction over the thoughts, the great invisible and internal springs of conduct. A man may be blameless in the eye of the law, and yet—daily observation testifies to the fact—be pursuing practices and indulging appetites destructive to his own peace, to the comfort of all connected with him, and to the good order of society. And we may easily conceive of a whole community of men, who shall do nothing in violation of the laws and who yet may be forming habits of thought and feeling which shall go on growing stronger and stronger, until they shall end at last in the destruction of all law and the overthrow of the whole social fabric. Wise and excellent as our laws may be, they must be couched in language. Now language is essentially imperfect and ambiguous, and there never was a written law, statute or constitution which did not give room, even among honest and well disposed minds, for a wide and manifold difference of opinion as to its true construction. If good men may differ as to the meaning of the laws, what becomes of their authority when the passions are interested in their interpretation? Oh no! it is in vain that we look to these human contrivances for salvation. They did not reach the source of the evil. They cannot command the great point of danger.

Again, is a reverence for human opinion the grand protecting principle that we need? Alas! the 'law of honor', so far from defending us, may if implicitly obeyed lead us into the very evils that we dread. Are not its requisitions oftentimes in manifest opposition to the highest interests of men? And are there any who

are so truly slaves, suffering all the wretchedness of slavery, as those who make the way of the world their rule of life? They may be driven, against every sentiment of right and every dictate of humanity, to imbrue their hands in a brother's blood, and the awful spot of bloodguiltiness shall cleave forever to their souls They may neglect their just debts and obligations, and yet the law by which they are governed remain unviolated and they still be honorable men. The unwritten laws of human opinion have too the same defect just pointed out in the civil institutions of society. They have regard only to outward appearances. So that those who make them their guides, and whose principle of action is the fashion of the world, care not save to satisfy appearances; and thus they may become only so many whited sepulchres, with a loathsome heap of corruption accumulated within, which may generate a deadly pestilence and desolate society, overturning all its institutions and filling all its ways with violence, robbery and blood.

Once more, shall we turn to the social and domestic relations of human life, and expect them to furnish that protection and to create in man that all-preserving principle of which we stand so much in want? I acknowledge that he who has surrounded himself by domestic ties has done something—has done much, to save himself from the evils incident to the condition of man. In many of the perils of life a man's family is his life-guard, and that community is encompassed by powerful bulwarks in which the joys of the domestic circle are appreciated and possessed. I should repose with great confidence in the continued security of a state or nation

distinguished for its domestic character. But the social and domestic affections, strong as they are, are not strong enough, of themselves and alone, for the moral salvation of man. They are frequently and mournfully disregarded. I only declare the testimony of common observation. The voice of passion drowns the gentle accents of love, and evil habits have power to rend asunder the tenderest and closest ties. The agonizing entreaty of a dying parent has failed to arrest his infatuated child in the downward career of vice and dissipation, and the cries of a perishing family have rung in his ears in vain whom the gaming table has fascinated, or upon whom the fetters of sensual appetite have been locked.

I have now briefly spoken of certain principles of human action very prevalently obeyed, and upon which great reliance is placed as if they were adequate safeguards of our nature. But they are found wanting. They are poor and beggarly elements. And yet I would not be understood to affirm that they are wholly inefficient. Inspire a man with a respect for human laws and human opinion and a regard to the tender ties of social life, and you have done much for him. But you have not done all. All these principles of conduct a man may obey, and yet not be completely armed against the natural perils of our condition. Nay, it is easy to see how his respect for public opinion may become so slavish, and his ambition for his family so great, that these may be the direct means and instruments of his ruin. If now these rules of life are imperfect even under the most favorable circumstances, what can be expected from them—whence shall the salvation of man come, at those

periods which have occurred in the history of the world, yes, and within the memory of this generation, when the fabric of social order is levelled with the ground, and discord and anarchy reign and the city resounds with tumult and the roar of mobs, and the mountains and the depths of the wilderness become the hiding-places of persecuted humanity? Will laws restrain them? They are trodden under foot. Will public opinion nerve the arm of justice and inspire the heart of the philanthropist? The law of honor has become a law of blood, and the public voice is for outrage and plunder. Will you depend upon the tender affections of the human soul? Alas! in the reign of lawless passion, in the excess to which the mind has become accustomed, one wide and desolating selfishness prevails and the human heart is changed into stone.

There is only one quarter left to which we can look. The principle vitally essential to the well-being of man, to his preservation from the most tremendous calamities, to his establishment in all that is safe, noble and glorious, is a high religious principle of feeling and action. I am aware that with this term, religious, are connected many vague, narrow and conflicting ideas. According to some men's definition of religion, if it were made the implicit rule of life the evils which invest the condition of man would only be aggravated. For according to the views of some, religion would seem to be nothing more nor better than a blind assent to unintelligible propositions, accompanied by a hearty denunciation of all dissentients, and substituted in the place of a constant observance of the moral duties of life. According to some, the requisitions of religion would seem to be met

and fulfilled by outward acts of devotion, performed at regular seasons, the intervening portions of time being spent pretty much in conformity to the way of the world. But it is not any religion of this sort—it is not any thing of this kind of which I am thinking when I say that our only refuge, our only hope lies in a high religious principle of thought and conduct. I refer to a deep and living conviction of our spiritual, moral, imperishable nature. He is a religious man in the divinest sense of the word—(I care not what is his costume or his creed, under what sky his lot is cast, or under what names and symbols or by what forms he worships the great Invisible),—he is the religious man, who with a strong and undoubting faith owns himself allied to something higher, purer and more lasting than any thing that he sees, or can even conceive of; who turns his full gaze inward upon his own heart and reads and studies that awful law, not written with hands, which is legible there, that law which every one who listens may hear promulgated in his own soul by a voice more solemn and unearthly than even that which spoke in the thunder of Mount Sinai. This it is to be religious in the only sense that will avail any thing,—to feel oneself the subject, the heaven-born, immortal subject of a perfect moral government, of whose institutions and sanctions one's own conscience is the only authorised interpreter. It is this feeling lifting a man above all narrow and sordid considerations, all low, animal propensities, all the petty heats of earthly passion, inspiring him to act in a wise, generous and godlike manner, and giving to his intellectual and moral powers their rightful supremacy,

—this it is that I speak of under the name of a high religious principle.

Do you ask where you shall witness an exhibition of its action? Alas! only feeble, partial, broken displays of its power do we behold in our day and generation. But you may see it in that long line of the great and good of whom the world was not worthy,—whom it could not understand, and so it opposed and hated and persecuted them. In the blessed Founder of our religion (to whom be glory forever!) we have its most perfect illustration. Consider by what a lofty principle he was swayed. His mind rose above the world and all its fading pleasures and temptations, its favors and its fears. He looked upon himself and upon all around him in a pure spiritual light. He saw God here, and the soul, and he felt that he and all moral beings were already in eternity, possessing an imperishable existence and sustaining the most exalted relations to God and futurity. Outward and visible objects were to him but symbols and types of invisible and everlasting things. The men of his day said that he was crazy, that he had a demon, and to many at the present material and mechanical period I doubt not he appears like one dealing with unsubstantial fancies and dwelling in a world of his own construction. And yet who ever lived in this world and in his relations to this world so blamelessly, so beautifully, so usefully as he? Who ever gave wiser rules of duty, or set before men a more lovely example?

So too his immediate followers looked not at the things which are seen and fleeting, but at things unseen. The objects which occupied their thoughts and kindled their

affections and inspired their efforts were entirely beyond the reach of the senses;—not that they were afar off,—but they had no affinity, no relation to the eye and the ear; while the things which the eye and the ear could take cognizance of had no charm for them. They pursued their course in direct opposition to the blandishments of sense and the menaces of power. To one who rejects every thing that he cannot see, who cares for nothing and believes in nothing which is not a matter of sense, the principle by which they were swayed appears visionary and barren in the extreme. He cannot understand them. They seem to him to have been a band of delirious fanatics, transported out of this world and living in an imaginary state. And yet when we recollect what they were and what they have done, we perceive clearly enough that they were eminently practical. While their spring of action was a high religious principle, a looking beyond the outward—the palpable, they have wrought a most marked and striking change on the things that are seen,—on the external state of the world. To them is to be traced that great change in the whole state of the world which has been going on for ages. We may cavil and sneer and doubt as we please, still it is undeniable that Christ and his apostles, while their objects were invisible—immaterial, and their affections and their faith had little interest in things seen, have nevertheless exerted a direct and commanding influence upon the whole condition of mankind. And when we think of the results and consequences of their existence and action, we have to confess that they are the last men to be looked upon as visionaries.

But the author of our religion and his immediate dis-

ciples, although by far the most striking, are not the only instances of the operation of that great rule of thought and conduct of which I have spoken as so desirable. We see it impressively displayed in those men who some two hundred years ago landed upon the northern shores of this continent, then a horrid wilderness. They came from the arms of civilization and the thousand comforts of cultivated life, leaving behind them the dear places of their childhood, the graves of their fathers and all the delightful associations of home and country. Why came they hither? What prompted them to throw themselves upon the faithless bosom of the great waters? What vision drew them to these savage regions? Did they come seeking for the islands of the blessed—for fairy scenes of wealth and splendor—for cities of gold and palaces strowed with diamonds? Was it a delusion of the senses—the delights of the eye and ear—the charms of things outward and seen, that beguiled them hither? Oh no! when their frail vessel came floating over the ocean's depths, and the heavens grew black around them and the bleak and rocky shores rose to their sight, then their spirits mounted within, not at pictures of sensual indulgence and dreams of earthly gratification, but things which no mortal eye hath seen or can see were ever hovering before them. Freedom, 'freedom to worship God,' this was the thing invisible for which they turned away from all that their eyes had loved to look upon,—from the pleasant hearths and the green fields of their native land, from those dear familiar spots and the sweet song of the lark and the sweeter voices of kindred and friends. Their principle of action held no alliance with the things

of sense. In devotion to their invisible, impalpable objects they looked upon the outward world and its whole aspect was changed in their view. Their pleasant country became to them a prison-house, the stormy ocean a highway of liberty, and the strange and wintry land to which they came a temple of the living God. The world they left sneered at them or at best pitied them as a poor, deluded company of fanatics, devoting themselves for a name, who would never be heard of more. And yet in less than two centuries after their departure the old world is startled at the noble anthem of liberty pealing across the waters from millions of voices. Behold what mighty things have resulted, not accidentally, but naturally—directly from their coming. That a vast empire would one day have been founded on these shores, whatever had been the character of those who first resorted hither, cannot be doubted. But that this nation is what it has been, what it still is, (and what we most devoutly pray it may forever be,) a *free* nation, is due in great part to the high *religious* spirit of those of whom I have spoken. And if the glorious spectacle here exhibited is ever to be laid in ruins,—to be succeeded by scenes of discord and oppression more full of gloom than the ancient savage silence of the land, it will be because the lofty principle of the pilgrim fathers has failed from amongst us. Let it become the universal disposition of the inhabitants of this land to look at things seen, to covet place, to regard outward show and distinction, to thirst for wealth as the supreme good,—and the days of our nation's glory are told. It is not one man nor any number of men that can shake this great fabric. The blood of this people will

be upon their own heads and the chains which bind them of their own forging, and the bloody idol of despotism if it ever profane this sacred soil will be formed by our own hands. Let the things invisible of the mind—the soul be forgotten or rejected, and all honor, all ambition, all happiness be found in the outward and the sensual, and then our prosperity must be transient and perishing, like the objects to which we have bound our hearts.

My hearers, the principle of which I have now spoken must be ours. Herein is our life. So long as we are strangers to it, whether we be high or low, prosperous or unfortunate, ignorant or wise, we are exposed to evils a thousand fold worse than death. There is no other way under heaven whereby we can be saved. In, in, upon ourselves we must learn to look,—upon the invisible and the eternal within us. We must learn to reflect, if we would know what this great and all-important rule of life is,—if we would be controlled by its power. 'While I was musing the fire burned.' It is patient and earnest thought, meditation, solemn musing that kindles upon the altar of the heart the fire of true religion. Come then, let us be serious and thankful. Ye especially who are in the bloom and vigor of life, are you living by no rule, save the capricious dictate of human opinion? Upon every case of action does it always occur to you as the only interesting question, what will the world think? Are you beguiled by fleeting and unprofitable amusements, giving none of your time to serious consideration? Or are you immersed in business; your imaginations, your affections absorbed in schemes of worldly profit? Is it in this way that

you are passing on to your graves, every moment bringing you nearer to those last resting-places? Ask the aged, those who have lived long in the world and are no longer able to take an active share in its affairs,—nay, this is not necessary, ask yourselves,—concerning the past. Look back upon the days that have thus been wasted and say, does it not all seem like a fading dream? Does the retrospect afford you any satisfaction? Can you consent that the future shall be as the past? Is there no secret discontent? Are you not, when you reflect, overpowered at times by a painful feeling of nothingness? Are you not almost sick of the emptiness of life, when you consider that in a few short years you must go down into the dust and your name and remembrance vanish from the earth? Give heed to this feeling of dissatisfaction. It is a proof of your capacity for something better and more enduring. It is the faint, dim struggle of your immortal nature, loathing the perishing things with which you ignorantly seek to satisfy it. Cultivate this discontent, until it prompt you to seek for the true end of your being—the true good of your nature,—until you are urged to start up and lay hold on that divine principle of life, which, like the outstretched arm of God, can alone lead you safe and unharmed through the trials of the present and the valley of the shadow of death onward to the interminable glories of the future.

SERMON XI.

BY REV. HERSEY B. GOODWIN,
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THE ACTIVE QUALITIES IN THE CHARACTER OF JESUS.

1 PETER II. 21.

LEAVING US AN EXAMPLE, THAT YE SHOULD FOLLOW HIS STEPS.

The example of Christ has been often the theme of the Christian's meditation. It is an example however which can never be studied without profit, and the more we reflect on it the more do we discern of its moral perfection and worth. The love and reverence for the Saviour which exist in the bosom of every rational Christian are founded in a knowledge of his character, and the more intimate that knowledge is, the purer and deeper will those feelings become. To be acquainted with the teachings of Jesus is indeed of the utmost importance, for they are teachings compared with which all others sink into insignificance, and they carry with them the evidence of their own divine origin. They commend themselves to the sober reason and the enlightened conscience of every man, and the older they grow the more does experience unfold of their truth, their beauty and their power. But the precepts and doctrines of Christ do not comprise the whole of his religion as it is presented in the New Testament and transmitted to our times. Christianity has not come

to us as a collection of abstract truths. It derives much of its authority from the works of its Founder, and it is illustrated and enforced by his life and character. We have not only therefore a collection of principles, but those principles are embodied in a human form,—living, moving, speaking and acting. The word of God has not only been given in an articulate language, but it has been manifested in flesh and tabernacled amongst us.

It has been sometimes said, and it is, I am apprehensive, thought and felt by many in our times, that the truths of our religion form a most beautiful and perfect theory, but that many of them when applied to the purposes of life are visionary and impracticable. Take, for example, the supreme love of God, the love of our neighbor as ourselves, the pursuit of goodness for goodness' sake, and more particularly the duty of loving our enemies and the forgiveness of injuries; these have uniformly been regarded as exalted principles, but many have doubted whether in the ordinary pursuits of life they could be reduced to practice. Now we appeal with confidence on these points to the life and character of Jesus, and we say that in that character they were reduced to practice. Putting out of view all inferior examples of Christian excellence, examples that might be mentioned in every age of the Christian church, we say that in Jesus himself these noble principles were clearly shown not to be theoretical but practical principles,—that he himself was the first, the brightest, the most glorious manifestation of their truth, their beauty and their power,—that his life was a constant commentary upon his doctrines,—and that in him above all

others Christianity was a living, breathing, acting thing.

From these remarks we may learn the importance of understanding the character of Christ. It is important, in bringing home to us the reality of his teachings and their practical power, and it is not too much to say that without some knowledge of that character we cannot fully understand those teachings. It is also important, in producing and keeping alive a love, a reverence and a close attachment for the Saviour, without which we cannot be his true disciples. It is important, as placing us within the influence of the purest and most powerful example of moral excellence which the world ever saw. It is above all important, as presenting us one of the most striking proofs of his divine commission and authority. For I venture to affirm that no man of unbiassed mind, no man who suffers his reason and his conscience to do their natural office within him, can long contemplate the ministry of Jesus from his baptism to his death and not say that here are proofs of a wisdom and a power which natural causes are insufficient to explain.

Such then being the importance of the subject, I would now call your attention to it, not so much for the purpose of repeating ideas which have been often suggested, as of unfolding some traits of character that are not sufficiently regarded. You have frequently heard of the piety and the benevolence of Jesus, of his entire consecration of himself to God, and his perfect devotedness to the best interests of mankind. You have dwelt also upon the unspotted innocence of his character, as of a lamb without blemish and without stain; for it was an innocence which the malice of his enemies

vainly endeavored to assail. You have been accustomed to meditate upon his humility, his gentleness, his forbearance, his patience and resignation, which were all the results of his deep, unfeigned and unwavering piety. These are doubtless the most obvious, and perhaps they are the most important traits of his character. They are those which strike the mind most forcibly when we think of his peculiar situation and the scene of trial and temptation through which he was called to pass. They are virtues which his situation peculiarly demanded, and though in the common estimation of the world they are many of them but passive qualities, yet in Jesus they required peculiar exertion and were continually the occasion of patient self-denial. As such we can contemplate them with no other feelings than those of admiration, homage and love.

But these qualities it should be remembered do not comprise the whole of the character of Jesus, and we ought not to dwell upon them to the exclusion of other traits which go to make up that perfect and harmonious whole. It is a wonderful truth, but yet it must be admitted to be not the less a truth, that the character of Christ as presented to us in the New Testament is one without defect,—that there is in all its parts and proportions a perfect balance,—that there is nothing to detract from its greatness or its goodness,—that no one quality throws another into the shade, but that all are unfolded in such wonderful harmony that we see in him the stature of a perfect man. This, I say, is his character as the Gospels represent him. But it is not so with the popular notions that prevail in regard to it. The idea of perfection varies, we know, with the different

minds that entertain it, and it is the case with many in the contemplation of distinguished worth that they dwell upon one or two traits to the exclusion of others no less bright and no less important. They seize upon those qualities which are most prominent to their own view, and neglect perhaps those which to other minds are far more obvious and striking. Now there is, if I mistake not, something of this to be seen in the common conceptions of the character of Christ. There is, I apprehend, in the ideas of the great majority of Christians at the present day a singular omission of many of the strong features of this character. As in the paintings and statues of the Catholic church the meek, the patient, the submissive sufferer is strongly delineated, mingled with something of European effeminacy, to the neglect of that Oriental dignity and manly vigor for which Jesus was distinguished, so it is in the popular conceptions of even Protestant Christians; the idea of the 'man of sorrows and acquainted with grief' is the one that predominates. We meditate upon his sufferings, and they are certainly calculated to call forth our sympathy, but the tendency, to say the least, is to overlook the dignity, the greatness and the glory of the sufferer. We remark the innocence of the dove, but we are apt to neglect the wisdom of the serpent which was no less conspicuous in his ministry. And so in general we contemplate his meekness, his patience, his calm resignation to the will of Heaven, and we forget for the time those other active and manly qualities which so much contributed to the perfection of his character. Nay, by thinking thus exclusively of his spirituality and heavenly mindedness, we lose sight of the fact

that he was a citizen of the world, and we bring him before us as a contemplative being, a recluse amongst men, as having but little intercourse with those who were around him, and being but poorly fitted to bear his part against the ignorance, the malice and the violence of the world. Thus in many minds the piety of the Saviour is little better than an enthusiastic zeal unfitting him for the duties and the enjoyments of life, his compassion and his charity degenerate into a sickly sensibility, his spirit of self-sacrifice is turned into a contempt for the world, and his meekness and humility amount to a poorness and abjectness of spirit which are entirely inconsistent with the greatness of his character.

If there is a tendency of this kind, if the character of the Saviour is often represented as feeble, effeminate and tame, if the manly qualities that he possessed are often overlooked in the popular conceptions, we cannot wonder that it receives so little respect—so little homage from the mass of mankind, and particularly from men of great intellectual vigor and nice discrimination. The only wonder is that such men should fall in with the popular current, that they should not examine for themselves and discover there the traits which they cannot but love and reverence and admire.

Now of these traits the first that I would speak of is the consciousness that he appears always to have manifested of the dignity of his office; a consciousness of the dignity of his office,—a sense of the importance of his divine commission,—in other words, an exalted self-respect, and this too in perfect consistency with his deep humility and condescension. It is true that he submitted to forego the wealth and honors and pleasures

of the world; he selected his followers and intimate friends not from the noble, the learned or the rich, but from the humble, the ignorant and the poor; he refused the honors and the emoluments of earthly office; and he often condescended to sit at table with and be the instructer of the publican and the sinner. He did this because, as he says, he 'came to seek and to save that which was lost.' But in all this, aye, in the midst of poverty and hunger and weariness and in the immediate prospect of danger and of death, the consciousness of his own exaltation and dignity never deserted him. From the commencement of his ministry to its close he felt the responsibleness of his mighty trust. He knew that he was raised up for no ordinary purpose, and that God would not desert him in the hour of his need. He had heard from heaven at the time of his baptism, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' and a sense of this truth always supported him. It was first conspicuous in the scene of the temptation, when the treasures of the world were placed at his disposal and he decided to reject them rather than resign his trust. It was manifest in his teachings in the sermon on the Mount, where he spoke 'as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.' It was shown in those various declarations that he made,—that he was the light of the world,—that he was a manifestation of God,—that he and the Father were one. The same consciousness of superior dignity was seen in that gracious invitation which he gave to the people when he said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' And so when at the grave of Lazarus, while the body of his friend was decaying before

him, he proclaimed himself the resurrection and the life; and when in taking leave of his disciples he declared that he was going away and would come again to them; and when at the time of his arrest he bade his disciple sheath his sword, saying, 'Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father,and he would give me more than twelve legions of angels;' and when in the presence of Pilate he declared that he was a king and added, 'To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth;' and finally, when in the last hour of his agony he exclaimed, 'It is finished,' and then, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' In all these instances he manifested the same deep sense of his exalted commission,—his divine vocation.

This consciousness of dignity must have shown itself in his demeanor as well as in his language. It is a remarkable fact that notwithstanding the peculiar intimacy of Jesus and his disciples—notwithstanding they continued with him for the space of two years and ate and drank and slept in his company, yet we find but one solitary instance of their approaching him with irreverent familiarity, or addressing him with disrespect or levity. What too must have been the dignity of his appearance and manner, when he went single-handed into the temple and drove out in the presence of their owners the sheep and the oxen and overturned the tables of the money changers, and no man opposed him. And so when the rulers sent officers to arrest him and they returned with the answer, 'Never man spake like this man,' how must his appearance have impressed them. What superiority must he have exhibited in

the last scene of his trials in the garden, when the company of soldiers all went backward and fell to the ground. These I mention as remarkable instances of the effect of his appearance,—the majesty of one who had no force to resist the violence of men, but the force of his own conscious innocence and uprightness and a deep sense of the favor of Heaven. We may appeal to this sense of superiority as a striking proof of his divine commission, and a characteristic mark of true greatness. In weaker minds this feeling would have degenerated into a haughty and overbearing pride, but in Jesus it was accompanied with the most perfect humility and sublime condescension. His self-respect did not lead him to despise others, but on the contrary he made it his meat and his drink to relieve their distresses and to satisfy their wants.

Another trait in the character of Jesus, which is apt to be overlooked, is that wonderful energy that he exhibited in his life. In this we may include also his resolute determination, his firm and unwavering decision. It was, in other words, his power to overcome obstacles—to go forward in the face of discouragement to accomplish his purposes. In the outset of his ministry he felt that a work was given him to perform, and he resolved to enlist in it all his powers. He saw before him a life of poverty and labor and suffering, he saw that he must renounce the strong and tender ties of kindred and home, he saw the discouraging look and he heard the bitter reproaches of his brethren, his townsmen and his friends, he saw the ignorance and prejudice and bigotry of his countrymen, he saw too that but little success in his life-time was to attend his labors;

but he had formed his determination, and no obstacle was sufficient to make him swerve from his purpose. He entered upon his work, and the reality of the difficulties he had to encounter produced no more effect upon his determination than the prospect. He pursued it with an untiring and unfailing energy even to the end. Knowing as he did that his cause was the cause of truth and philanthropy, and having the strong assurance that he was favored of Heaven, he found himself able to overcome every obstacle within and without him. Conscious of the purity of his motives and the benevolence of his mission, he was 'strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.'

Nearly allied to this is another quality no less striking and no less important. I mean his untiring industry—his constant activity. By means of this quality how much of labor did he crowd into the little space of two short years. In going about all Galilee healing the sick,cleansing the leperr, casting out demons, raising the dead,—in his frequent journeyings on foot from Galilee to Jerusalem,—in his unwearied labors by day and his watchings and prayers by night,—in word and in work he seemed to be constantly active. From the rising to the setting of the sun he is concerned in the business of his mighty errand. He is punctual and prompt to the call of duty. He is ready to take advantage of all circumstances favorable to his object, whether it be at the table of the publican or in the house of his friend, in the fishing boat of his disciples, at the well of Sychar, or amidst the lingering agony of crucifixion. He suffers no opportunity to escape him for inculcating truth or performing a beneficent act. His life was de-

voted to the work of doing good, and he therefore suffered no moment of the day to be spent in useless meditation. His devotions were performed in the solitude of the deserts and in the darkness of midnight. It was his maxim constantly acted on, 'I must work the work of Him that sent me while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.'

Again, the fearlessness of Jesus was a striking and prominent trait in his character. In this we may include his boldness in opposing prejudice and vice, and his fortitude in encountering danger. Of these qualities his whole ministry was a continued exemplification. But in particular we appeal as proof of the first to his bold denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees. In the immediate presence of the rulers of the land he speaks plainly of their tyranny and hypocrisy. For the ordinary frailties and sins of men he feels a deep compassion, but with the wilful perverseness of the learned Scribe and the haughty and overbearing Pharisee he makes no compromise. He respects their authority, and tells his disciples that they sit in the seat of Moses and are therefore to be regarded. But upon their conduct he pronounces a fearful wo, and he represents their example as to be carefully avoided. As an illustration of his fortitude we need only refer to the circumstances of the last week of his life. The feast of the Passover was at hand and he resolved to go up to Jerusalem. But to go to Jerusalem was to go there to die. Of this he was certain and he plainly foretold it to his disciples. The call of duty was stronger than the fear of danger and of death, and he hesitates not to obey it. He goes to Jerusalem, he is found openly in

the temple, he opposes the prejudices of the multitude, he condemns the vices of the chief priests and rulers. In the garden of Gethsemane he shows the natural feelings of humanity—the shuddering at the idea of a torturing and lingering death, but in a single moment he recovers himself, and says, 'Father, not my will, but thine be done.' He goes fearlessly forward to meet the company of soldiers, and when he hears them saying that they were looking for Jesus of Nazareth, he unhesitatingly says to them, I am he.

There is still another quality in the character of our Saviour which calls for our admiration, and should never be overlooked. It is his willingness to adapt himself to the intellectual and moral condition of those with whom he lived. He came, we must remember, with a religion that was suited to the most advanced stages of human society. It was a religion, the whole depths of whose meaning and the breadth of whose application have probably not yet been fully understood. It is a religion that unfolds itself with new meaning and new beauty and force as the human mind advances. But he came with it to a people vicious, ignorant and degraded. He addressed it directly to them. He engrafted it upon all that was left of purity amongst them. Often did he meet them on their own ground and inferred the truth from their own premises. He taught them by parables and familiar illustrations, such as are suited to an imperfect state of advancement. In fine, he left among them these noble principles in such a form that all who descried might understand them, and that age after age might unfold more of their truth. In this respect did he show that he was neither visionary nor am-

bitious, but was guided by a remarkable judgment—by what is usually called a great common sense.

Finally, there are three qualities seldom mentioned that illustrate still more fully the perfection of his character. Notwithstanding his high vocation and the spirituality of his mind, our Saviour was susceptible of personal friendship, of strong filial affection, and of earnest love of country. His friendship was shown in his attachment to his disciples, whom he called his friends, and more particularly to the family of Lazarus and his sisters. His filial affection was displayed in his early years, and particularly in his dying moments, when he commited his mother who was weeping by his side to the care of his beloved disciple. His love of country was most strongly exhibited when he came for the last time to Jerusalem. From the mount of Olives he beheld the towers and battlements of the temple, and as he beheld them he wept over its fate? 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but ye would not.'

I have thus mentioned some of those remarkable features in the character of our Lord which are commonly regarded as manly and active qualities. I have spoken of his sense of dignity or self-respect, of his unfailing energy, of his untiring industry, of his fearlessness in opposing vice and encountering danger, of his judgment in adapting himself to the condition of his countrymen, and lastly, of his personal friendship, of his filial affection, and of his love of country.

I have dwelt upon these points in order to correct what has seemed to me to be erroneous, and at the same time to meet the objection of the unbeliever. They are qualities, you perceive, which are perfectly consistent with his piety, his charity, his gentleness, forbearance and humility. They show that his character was not tame nor feeble nor unduly proportioned. They exhibit that union of the gentle and vigorous features which is so necessary to human perfection.

In all these qualities he is a pattern worthy of our constant imitation, and an object deserving of our highest respect, veneration and love.

SERMON XII.

BY REV. HERSEY B. GOODWIN,
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THE GOVERNMENT OF THE THOUGHTS.

JEREMIAH IV. 14.

HOW LONG SHALL THY VAIN THOUGHTS LODGE WITHIN THEE?

If there is any one point which clearly distinguishes the morality of the Bible from all human systems, it is the stress which it places on the government and right direction of the thoughts. There is nothing more striking in all the teaching of our Saviour than the bold and decided opposition he is constantly making to the mere external religion of the Scribes and Pharisees. With him it was not the murderer only who was in danger of the judgment, but he who was angry without a cause; it was not the openly licentious merely that was criminal, but he who indnlged in sensual thoughts and impure desires; and that man was not the most pious whose devotion was the loudest and whose prayers were the longest, but he whose thoughts and feelings were most seriously engaged.

It is this point too, which distinguishes above all others the government of God from a human government, and which may make a man's character in the eyes of man a very different thing from what it is in reality.

The criminal that is brought before an earthly tribunal the law considers innocent till he is proved guilty, and the private opinion which you may have formed of your neighbor, if it is not an unfair prejudice, is made up from evidence; but in the judgment of the Almighty, at the bar of God, these things are not so. We judge by outward appearances, but God looketh on the heart; he judges by the intentions and the motives. And surely he who created the human soul and understands its operatiens must be acquainted with its thoughts and purposes before they appear in words and actions.

Such then being the importance of the subject, let us attend to some of the difficulties which meet us at the outset in managing our thoughts, and to some of the means and motives which we have to engage in the undertaking.

It is a fact, the truth of which will not be denied, that the mind of man is in some degree at his own disposal. I say in some degree, because I am inclined to think the work is not so easy as may be at first imagined. Perhaps there is nothing more difficult than for a man to get the entire mastery over his own thoughts. There are moments when the strongest mind will feel its weakness in this respect and be carried into speculations which are unsatisfactory and unsafe. We talk about freedom of thought, and it is a popular maxim that there is nothing so free; but when we look at it more closely, is it not true, that in many cases, instead of having the mastery of our thoughts, we are mastered by them? Instead of our thoughts being at our disposal, are not we too often at theirs? And to me this is a most melancholy reflection,—that man who

feels himself the lord of this lower creation,—man, to whom nothing seems so degrading as captivity and slavery, should yet suffer himself to be chained and fettered to a single imagination—to be in slavery perhaps to a mere whim, and yet not think of captivity;—and this too the captivity of the mind, the soul, all which the man has to carry with him to eternity.

But in order to get a more precise idea of the power in question, let us look for a moment at the nature of the mind and see what is that course of things of which we do or do not have the direction. In our waking hours, strictly speaking, the mind is never wholly idle. At no given moment can we say we are thinking of nothing. We cannot, if we would, banish all thought; the current of our ideas is constantly flowing on, one coming in to crowd out another in endless succession. Now it is this train of thought which is differently affected in different individuals by objects without and desires and passions within: and to have this so far under our control that we can govern it by certain principles and according to certain rules, should be our main object; and this I maintain is perfectly practicable. All the difficulties which lie in the way may be summed up in two views.

First, the difficulty of confining the mind to a single subject. We must all have felt how nearly impossible this seemed at first, and yet have been surprised at our own powers at last. It is certainly a great art —this of preventing the mind from wandering, and one which we cannot expect to acquire in a moment. The habit of distracted thought is one which grows up with us, and I know no other remedy for it but care and at-

tention. It is a habit from which we can free ourselves if we will take the pains, but it is one which we can remove only by fixing another ; there is no middle ground. Let us not be discouraged by the result of a single trial ; we may fail repeatedly, but we must try again and again ; and I believe at last we can succeed beyond our highest expectations.

The only other difficulty is that of being able at any time we choose to transfer our thoughts from one subject to another. Some favorite desire rises in the mind, and we know the more we indulge it, the more powerful it becomes ; we wish perhaps to banish it at once from the mind, but this we are unable to do directly by a single act of the will, for such an attempt we all know would have the effect to continue it. But can we not give the mind a different direction—can we not in effect banish a thought indirectly, by bringing in another to take its place ? Our every day's experience will satisfy us of this. It is seen in our daily conversation, in all our attempts at reasoning, and particularly in the performance of regular and stated duties. But let us suppose that some suggestion of passion has taken possession of our thoughts, and we feel that its indulgence is wrong and degrading to our nature ; it is no time then to parley with that passion and reason it down ; we feel that the hour of temptation is coming and we must fly from its influence. It may do to reason in cooler moments, when reason is on her throne and exerting her power ; but in the moment of excitement reason is blindfold. The only remedy at such times lies in principles which we have fixed beforehand, principles which will enable us to leave behind us this tainted atmosphere and

fly to a purer region. These I am aware are to be acquired by the newly reformed man in no other way than by diligent attention,and we can only say, it were better —far better, if they had been the very elements of his education. The remedy lies, if it lies anywhere, in a power which he has within him, and which I believe every man can bring into action—the power of transferring his thoughts; for this power do we all possess in as great a degree as is necessary to our virtue.

I have thus endeavored to illustrate the two forms in which the great difficulty presents itself in the management of our thoughts. It is one which arises from the nature of the mind and the situation in which we are placed, and so far is it from being an evil, it is something essential to our moral natures. The laws of association are going on within us, and the objects of sense without us are constantly influencing our passions and affections. And it should be a great object with the Christian so to have the control of all these, that he may be able on the one hand to draw off his thoughts as the occasion may require, and fix them steadfastly on the one great purpose which it is desirable to keep before the eye of the mind, and on the other to change the current of thought whenever he finds it springing from an impure fountain or running in an impure channel. And that this is in some measure practicable, I think is evident; but though practicable, not at first easy. It requires exertion, as all virtue does; for if there is an influence acting upon us to draw us out of the right course, then there must be some power from within ourselves to resist it and keep us right.

To one who has already begun this good work I would say, Go on in the discipline and you are sure of success; you have found daily that you have gained more and more of this power over yourself; go on then, and you will be able to resist the strongest temptations which this world can set before you. For it is in the well ordered mind, and there alone, that there is perfect room for the exertion of the will. That man is the perfect free moral agent, who thinks for himself and acts for himself, and there is the most real virtue, and there of course are the highest rewards.

But are there not some men who think but little about this government of the thoughts, and who have never realized its importance? I would ask such, if it is not a secret feeling with them, that "if the outer man is only right, all is right." But look at this absurdity. The outer man! what is it? There is not a day passes, but you see it crumbling to pieces. God changes the countenance and sends the man away, and you might as well say that the dress of an individual makes the man, as to speak of this outer form as being any thing essential. No, my friends. Goodness, virtue, religion must have their seat in the heart—in the thoughts—in the affections, or they have their seat nowhere. Would you then be truly good, you must begin with the thoughts—those sentinels of a man's heart. Manage them and you manage your whole life. Your intellectual, your moral, your religious progress are all connected with and dependant upon this course.

And this leads us to a consideration of some of the means which we have in our power for the purposes of

self-government. These need only be suggested. Begin then, first, with order and a right distribution of time; for order is God's law, and it should be man's. Let every moment have some useful occupation—let not the train of thought pass on from day to day without accomplishing something; for this mental idleness (if I may so call it) is one of the first sources of mental disorder. In the second place, always endeavor to think with reference to some definite end. Frequently ask yourself the question,—to what definite purpose have I devoted the last hour, the last day, or the last year. Set apart seasons for this business of reflection and self-examination. By thus turning in the mind upon itself we shall be able the more easily to discern our deficiences and supply them; and he is a happy man who is not startled at such moments by the time he has wasted.

But besides these means which relate to the general management of the thoughts rather than to giving them any particular direction, let us not forget to dwell much and often on the character of God. There are times, to the Christian peculiarly, when the mind without a Father to go to would feel without a home. It looks round upon the world, but it finds no sympathy in its cold and joyless pleasures; it would fain fasten to some kindred being like itself, but the tie that was to unite them was frail and it broke; it rejoiced perhaps to put confidence in the heart of its fellow, but the tempter came and that heart proved treacherous; and surely then, if ever, it is the impulse of nature to pray, and the very thought that God looks down from heaven his holy habitation and listens to that prayer gives to a creature like man joy

and confidence unspeakable. But the influence of prayer is an influence to be felt rather than described. There is a power connected with it, we know not how, a power which must no doubt come in part from within ourselves, and partly also from the benevolent agency of God, and you who have felt it need not be told how unfailing a source it is of intellectual as well as moral strength. All things else are constantly changing and fading away, but God changes not, and on him can the mind fix itself and rest eternally secure.

Besides this effect of prayer there are a thousand other influences exerted upon the mind, which because they are invisible we do not think of. In our dull melancholy moments we are apt to speak of this world as full of temptations, and it argues in us either mental blindness or cold ingratitude that we do not look more frequently on the bright side of things. Now we are, it is true, surrounded by temptations, and they are leading us astray; but we are also surrounded with the best influences which can possibly be exerted upon moral beings, and I really believe that in the process of becoming corrupt and depraved a man has to resist a most mighty combination. The way of transgressors is hard —not only in the evils they suffer as the consequences of sin—but it is hard every step. Go where they will, and there is one nearer to them than they are to themselves—one who is constantly whispering to them in the language of caution, of reproof, of encouragement to virtue. They cannot avoid this Being if they would, for it is the omnipresent Diety, and to him the thoughts and the feelings are naked and open. Yes, my brethren, go where we will, the voices of an innumerable company

of the messengers of God are every where to be heard, and they are calling upon men daily and hourly in thrilling tones to repent and reform. There is a voice which comes to us from every point in the universe and tells us of God's character and of what he requires. It comes up to us in the memory of our early days, it speaks to us from the graves of those whom we loved and honored, it tells us of lessons which we learned at the fireside of home—of prayers which we were early taught to repeat at the knees of an affectionate mother. We have all this, and more. The Bible is in our houses, and conscience in our bosoms. And yet we say, the world is full of temptations. But let us beware, when we say this, that we are not guilty of the sin of ingratitude. Let us beware too, that we do not hide ourselves behind this false curtain as an excuse for our sinning.

So abundant then are the sources of purity around and within us, that I would urge it upon you as another great rule in the government of your thoughts, to fill up every moment with what is pure, and there will be no room for what is impure. Crowd the mind with good, and you may be sure that the bad will not enter.

It is time that we turn to consider some of the motives we have to self-government. These may be all comprehended under this most important one—of man's accountableness,—an accountableness which is evident from all the consequences internal and external of any n is nanagement of the mind. In order to see these consequences more plainly, let us turn to one or two instances—such as we meet with in common life. The

first that occurs to me is the gloomy melancholy man—he who is constantly taking but one view of his situation, and that a dark and foreboding one. He sees clouds and storms brooding in the brightness of sunshine; he feels that every thing is working against him, and nothing for him; there is always some disorder preying at the vitals and bearing him on to his grave; his imagination is filled with spectres of horror, and even his sleep is disturbed with the dim visions of the night; and were he to make out a catalogue of his woes and see them all before him at one view, it would be like putting a dagger to his breast. Now I would suggest to such a man, whether he does not sin against the light and knowledge that God has given him. Admitting the truth of every calamity he may mention, I would ask him, how it comes to pass that to him every thing is gloomy, while to others every thing is cheerful and glad—how is it that while others are suffering tenfold worse evils, they can smile in the midst of them and bless their Maker that they are no worse. Such a man, if I mistake not, will generally tell you of an indefinite something—a something which nobody else knows anything about; and I am ready to allow that in some cases this may be true—that there may be some defect in the man's physical constitution; but generally speaking, I think you will allow that this indefinite something is in the imagination. And certainly, if that man is in any degree a rational being, this misery is of his own creating; for there was a time, and I believe there are very few cases in life in which we may not say there is a time still, for such a man to have the disposal of his thoughts. And where this is true, the murderer of his own peace

is just as much accountable for these dark views and this gloomy state of mind, as he who maliciously sets himself at work to destroy the peace of another. The crime may not be so great, but it is nevertheless a crime.

Turn next to the profligate and abandoned man—the victim of intemperance or sensuality. He takes too but one view of human life ; he sees good in nothing but the indulgence of appetite. And what I would urge is that it is at this point his accountableness begins. It is for this darkness of the mind which he might have made "a lamp to his feet and a light to his path," nay more, which he may make now, if he will only wake up from this spiritual sleep and look out on the universe of God, it is for this very darkness that he is to blame. We must go back to the beginning, if we would see the cause of a great deal of sin in the world, and man's ability to avoid it. If we look over the long list of crimes which blacken the annals of the world, we shall find they can all be traced to some mismanagement of the thoughts that might have been avoided. Will you tell me that the motive is wanting, and that the blindness is natural ? I do not believe it. The most ignorant savage that wanders in the wilderness who has eyes to see and ears to hear, who can talk to you of green fields in another life and of the great Spirit that is there presiding, has motive enough for his virtue. The great difference, my friends, lies here ; his virtue is not of so high an order as yours, and consequently his guilt is not so great. Still vice and virtue are two things to him just as much as they are to you. And it is this distinction—this knowledge of right and wrong, howev-

er different it may be in different individuals, which is motive enough ; and if you will point me to a man who has it not and never did have it, you must point me to one who is not a moral being, and of course can suffer no such thing as moral consequences.

We may here make a very useful and important distinction, that we should always bear in mind—that it is not the first rising of desire in our bosoms which is sinful. For our appetites and affections are those which God gave us, and he meant them for our good. It is for their abuse—for their excess, that we shall be called to an account. Wrong thoughts and wrong feelings may rise in the mind and pass off leaving the man innocent. It is in the indulgence of them that the iniquity consists —the suffering them to continue when we know they are wrong.

But it is not from apparent consequences merely that I would urge this right conduct of the mind. There are consequences more to be dreaded which man may not discover. There may be neglects and wrong courses whose effect is purely internal. Envy and pride may be rankling in our bosoms when all is fair without. Our duties to ourselves—our self-examinations may be entirely neglected, and we be faithful to our fellow-men. Above all, our duties to God—the devotions of the closet—that incense which Christianity requires to be offered up on the altar of a man's own heart, may not be thought worthy of a moment's attention, while the externals of religion may be regularly performed. It is in this way that the intellectual, the moral, the religious progress of the soul may be hindered, and the moral man chained down as it were, while the outer man is esteem-

ed and honored. It is in this way that "the light that is in us becomes" gradually "darkness," "and how great," says the Saviour, "must that darkness be!" Let us remember, brethren, that though these things may be hidden from the eyes of man, they are not, they cannot be hidden from the judgment of God, for God judgeth not as man judgeth.

Let us be exhorted then, by the duties which we owe ourselves—by our feelings of self-respect of self-love, of self-interest; by the relations in which we stand to our fellow men, as members of the same community, as brethren of one human family; and above all as Christians, as citizens of the same household of faith, and as fellow-travellers to the same spiritual kingdom—having one faith, one hope, one Father, let us be entreated to "keep our thoughts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life."

SERMON XIII.

BY REV. BERNARD WHITMAN,

OF WALTHAM, MASS.*

CONTINUAL REJOICING.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 4.

REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS.

Are we commanded to rejoice always? Are we to rejoice in trouble, and disappointment, and poverty, and affliction, and death? This is the christian duty enjoined by the Apostle. 'Rejoice in the Lord always.'

But is there any foundation for continual rejoicing? Certainly. It is laid in our very nature. Our Father created us for ever-increasing and never-ending happiness. This is evident from our various capacities for enjoyment, and from the manifold means provided for their innocent gratification. This is evident from the paternal character of our Creator, and from the commands of his revelation. For surely a Being of infinite love could not have made rational beings for misery, or required them to perform duties for which they were never designed.

But what can make us always joyful? Conformity

* Among the last acts in the life of the lamented author of this discourse was the fulfilment of a promise given previously to his sickness, that in the course of the year he would furnish a sermon for this publication. In the selection of the manuscript he was influenced by the conviction that it contained preeminently, as he said, 'the true doctrine.' It was a doctrine by which his own character was formed, and the effects of which were witnessed in his whole deportment.

to the requisitions of the gospel. The Christian religion was given to effect this very object;—to make us acquainted with ourselves; to aid us in obeying the laws of our constitution; and to render us always holy and happy. If permitted to exert its full influence on our hearts and lives, it will accomplish this glorious purpose. For it is perfectly adapted to our wants, as imperfect, sinful, dying immortals. But without the assistance of this divine and heavenly treasure we cannot secure the invaluable blessing. We shall indeed be joyful sometimes and on some occasions; we shall rejoice in seasons of prosperity and success. This we cannot help. It is natural to mankind. We are so constituted, that whatever may be our color, condition, character or religion, we shall have some moments of joy and gladness. But we cannot rejoice in the Lord evermore, without a strict conformity to the injunctions of Christ Jesus.

But how can the gospel produce such desirable effects? In two ways. First, by removing the causes of our unhappiness; and secondly,by giving us such motives, dispositions, habits and hopes, that we shall be at all times virtuous, contented, resigned and cheerful. Let me then endeavor in the present discourse to illustrate the manner in which the religion of Jesus is designed to make us always happy. What are some of the most common causes of human misery, and how may they be removed?

1. One cause of human misery is ungoverned appetite. You have doubtless known some victims of intemperance, gluttony, licentiousness. You have noticed the evils of their disobedience, in their impaired

health, in their perverted affection, in their irritable temper, in their uneasy conscience, in their domestic wretchedness. And you will admit that they are miserable a considerable portion of their waking hours; that they occasion much suffering to those with whom they are connected; and that their excessive indulgence of their appetites is the principal cause of this unceasing torment.

Now the gospel removes this cause of misery by its plain instructions and its encouraging exhortations. It plainly forbids all excess in the gratification of the appetites, and threatens such disobedience with the most alarming punishments. Its threatenings are not long delayed, as all can testify from their own observation or experience. It commands temperance and moderation in all things, and promises an ample reward to the obedient. Its promises are soon fulfilled, as the health and peace and prosperity of the chaste and temperate can demonstrate. It promises all needed assistance in the work of reformation, and in the ways of well doing; and encourages a sober life by every powerful and affecting motive. And if we avoid this species of excess, as we all may if we choose, this cause of wretchedness will be removed; and we shall be qualified by our virtuous character to rejoice in the Lord. Conformity to the laws of our nature in this particular may therefore be secured by attention to the warnings and encouragements of the gospel.

2. Another cause of human misery is ungoverned passion. You have doubtless known persons whose temper was disturbed by the most trivial events. And when provoked, they became either angry, or sullen, or

fault-finding, or peevish. And by giving frequent indulgence to their passions a habit of dissatisfaction, of fretfulness, of complaining, became thoroughly established. You will acknowledge that all such individuals are more or less unhappy while under the influence of such excited sensations, feelings and impulses; unhappy in proportion to the degree in which they permit their tempers to rebel, and suffer them to disturb th tranquil and agreeable state of their minds.

Now what is the real cause of this misery? Will you mention the many trials and provocations to which these persons are exposed. These are not the true causes. For the same and similar troubles may happen, and do actually happen, to many other individuals without disturbing their tranquillity and cheerfulness. Consequently the trials in themselves considered are nothing more than the occasions of the wretchedness. For if they do not disturb or destroy the enjoyment of one person, they need not of any individual whatever. To some other source then we must look for the real cause of this evil; and this you may discover in the persons themselves. They do not govern their passions as commanded, and repeatedly commanded in the gospel. This divine command establishes their power of self-government; and their conformity to these benevolent requisitions of our heavenly Father would remove the difficulty. Whenever therefore any of us find ourselves venting the fruits of our ungoverned passions and tempers in angry threatenings, and querulous complaints, and peevish lamentations, let us remember that our misery is not caused by any provocations of the persons or things or events around us, but by our disobedience to

hte laws of our nature ; not by any thing without us, but by an inward enemy whom God requires us to conquer.

But how can we conquer this enemy? How can we remove this cause of wretchedness? By conforming to the requisitions of the gospel. By possessing the christian character. And this can be insured by serious reflection, resolute determination, and persevering exertion. We must reflect on the dreadful nature of this evil. We must realize that if we neglect the government of our passions, and suffer ourselves to become irritated on many occasions, and form a habit of fretting and murmuring and complaining, we shall make ourselves almost continually wretched, and we shall disturb or destroy the enjoyment of those around us. We must also remember, that by giving unlawful indulgence to our passions we punish ourselves for the ignorance, or follies, or vices of others. If our dependents do not satisfy our expectations, why should we punish ourselves for their deficiencies?—as we most assuredly do, whenever we suffer ourselves to become vexed and irritated at their misconduct. If our children do not obey all our commands, why should we punish ourselves instead of them for their disobedience?—as we most assuredly do, whenever we vent our displeasure in harsh reproofs and angry threatenings. If our friends and neighbors do not comply with all our wishes, why should we punish ourselves for their neglect and folly? —as we most assuredly do, whenever we manifest our dissatisfaction in idle complaints, and boisterous railings, and slanderous accusations. Whatever may be our provocations, we gain nothing by giving indulgence to

our irascible passions. On the contrary, we lose much, very much, even the command of our own spirit; and we awaken a host of tormenting fiends in our own bosoms. And finally, we should be ever on our guard against every species of provocation. And if at any time we detect ourselves giving way to excited passion, we should pause. We should pause until our self-possession and tranquillity are restored. And let it be our unceasing prayer, that God would assist us in the government of our own spirit. If we cherish such reflections and persevere in such exertions, we shall come off conquerors and more than conquerors. For our obedience to the precepts of our Saviour will not only banish this cause of misery, but give us that self-control which will enable us to rejoice in the Lord,—to rejoice in our conformity to the laws of our nature.

3. Another cause of human misery is ungoverned desire. You have surely known individuals desiring things which they were unable to obtain; some desiring riches, some public honors, some flattery and attention, some one thing and some another. And when their desires were not gratified, and their wishes were disappointed, you have seen them yield to repining, discontent, wretchedness. And you will allow that such persons are unhappy while under the influence of such disappointed, dejected and morose feelings; unhappy in proportion as they give themselves up to gloomy and melancholy sensations, and permit them to disturb or destroy the tranquil and agreeable state of their minds.

Now what is the real cause of this misery? Will you name disappointment? Not so. For many persons are frequently and greatly disappointed without being

made wretched. Consequently disappointment in itself considered is not the true cause of the evil, but merely the occasion. For if one can remain tranquil and joyful under disappointment, then all can, by using exertions proportioned to their different constitutional temperaments, their different states of health, and their different circumstances, characters and dispositions. The true cause of the unhappiness must therefore exist in themselves. They do not govern their desires as commanded and repeatedly commanded in the gospel; and consequently are often and perhaps greatly disappointed. And when disappointed they do not exercise that resolution and patience and submission, which are also repeatedly and plainly enjoined. But they yield to discontented thoughts, and to disconsolate feelings, and to dejected expectations; and thus increase their trials by fostering in their own bosoms the very seeds of misery. Whenever therefore we find ourselves unhappy because our desires are not all gratified, let us remember that disappointment is not the real cause of our misery, but our disobedience to the laws of our Maker; not any thing without or around us, but an inward enemy whom our Father requires us to conquer, and whom our Saviour empowers us to destroy.

But how can we conquer and destroy this cause of misery? By conformity to the requisitions of the gospel. By possessing the christian temper and character. We must endeavor to restrain our desires within our means of gratification. When we wish for any good, we should ask ourselves, if it be in our power to obtain the desired object; and if it be, we should again ask, if it be right, and consistent with our circumstances, our

other wants, our social and benevolent obligations, to suffer our wishes to be gratified. If we feel convinced that it is either impossible, or inexpedient, or unjust to gratify our desire, we should banish all thoughts relating to the object. For if we indulge the desire after we know it cannot or ought not to be gratified, we torment ourselves to no purpose. Should our reasonable expectations be disappointed, as they frequently will for our moral discipline, we should preserve our equanimity. We gain nothing by yielding to despondency, and we suffer much uneasiness and vexation. We should also recollect that happiness does not depend on the gratification of all our desires, but on being contented with what is proper and possible for us to procure. If we cannot bring our circumstances to our desires, we can bring our wishes to our circumstances. The state of mind—a contented disposition, and not the condition, not wealth nor honors nor ease, constitutes the true foundation for happiness. In whatever state we may be placed then, let us learn to be content and cheerful. And whatever may be our circumstances or our disappointments, let us ever rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us rejoice in the belief that our best interests are designed in all our trials as well as in our mercies. If we thus conform to the divine instructions of Jesus, this cause of misery will be removed, and we shall be qualified for rejoicing in the Lord, and for a conformity to the requisitions of his holy will.

4. Another cause of human misery is ungoverned imagination. You must have known individuals who were tormented with imaginary troubles; continually looking on the dark side of things; always fearing some

approaching calamity; and thus habitually borrowing trouble of the future. You will allow that such persons are unhappy, while under the depressing influence of this ungoverned imagination; unhappy in the degree in which they yield to mental depression and pain.

Now what is the true cause of this misery? Will you say ill health, nervousness, timidity? No. These are generally effects, not causes; effects of careless exposure, or indolent habits, or defective education, or injurious reading, or some one of a thousand deviations which might be named. There are many individuals of delicate health, and nervous irritability, and constitutional fearfulness, and active imaginations, who are never made wretched by imaginary troubles. And if so, then they need not disturb the happiness of any one; they are not the true cause of the evil; they are merely the occasion. The real cause of the misery exists in themselves, in their disregard of the laws of their nature. They do not govern their imaginations as commanded and repeatedly commanded in the gospel. They are over-anxious for the future. And being doubtless afflicted, as all men must expect to be in this probationary world for their own spiritual improvement, they think more of their trials than of their blessings. They neglect the good and live in fearful apprehension of the evil. The mercies within their reach they do not enjoy; the troubles which may never arrive they constantly dread. They turn their thoughts in upon themselves, and dwell on the pictures of a morbid and diseased fancy, until depression of spirits, anxious feelings, and melancholy forebodings become thoroughly confirmed into habits. Whenever therefore we find our enjoyments disturbed by the anticipation of future evils, let us recol-

lect that the cause of our misery exists in our own bosoms ; that it is not occasioned by any thing without us, but by an inward enemy whom we have authority to conquer.

But how can we destroy this cause of misery ? By conformity to the requisitions of the gospel. By possessing the christian temper and character. We must reflect that all events above our control are ordered by our heavenly Father. And we may ever rest assured that he will bring upon us no greater trials than he gives us strength to bear ; and no afflictions but what are designed to promote our best welfare. We avert no evils by indulging imaginary fears ; but we make ourselves almost continually wretched. Our manifold blessings yield us little or no comfort. Our usefulness is in a greater or less degree injured. We show a practical distrust in the goodness of our all-perfect Father. To him alone belong the mysteries of futurity. With them we have no further concern, than to provide for their probable exigencies ; than to provide for the temporal wants of ourselves and connexions so far as we may honestly and piously ; and to qualify ourselves for the employments and enjoyments of the heavenly world. Has not our merciful Father hitherto preserved, protected and blessed us ? And is he changeable ? Will he ever desert the children of his infinite love ? Will he not continue his lovingkindness and tender mercy ? Most assuredly. Let our minds then be staid on him. Let us habitually realize that he will ever do for us what he knows to be best for our spiritual welfare. We must also remember to find suitable employment for all our time and all our thoughts. It is much better to look on the bright than the dark side of persons and things.

It is much better to regard our fellow-men as honorable and virtuous, until proved the contrary, than to consider them as wholly inclined to all evil, wholly averse to all good. It is much better to view this world as one which God has made, and blessed, and pronounced good, than to look upon it as under the wrath and curse of an incensed, omnipotent Diety. If we will thus cherish an unshaken confidence in our heavenly Father; if we will entertain correct views respecting his paternal government; if we will enjoy with thankfulness our manifold favors, and improve all our talents to the glory of the Most High, we shall destroy this source of misery, and acquire such motives, dispositions, habits and hopes as will enable us to rejoice in the Lord always.

I have noticed a sufficient number of examples to illustrate the manner in which the gospel is designed to make us rejoice in the Lord always. The more perfect our conformity to its requisitions, the greater and more uninterrupted will be our happiness. If any Christian is miserable, the fault must be principally in himself, and not in his religion, unless he has embraced false and erroneous views of revelation, which will always produce more or less trouble sooner or later. And it is as much a part of religious duty to be happy as it is to be honest. We may be honest when we cannot help it,—when we have no temptations to dishonesty; but unless we aim to be always honest, even when exposed to the greatest temptations, our religion does not exert its full influence on our principles and conduct. So with our happiness. We may rejoice when we cannot help it,—when exposed to no trials; but unless we strive to be cheerful at all times, and when exposed to the greatest

afflictions, our religion does not exert its full influence on our hearts and lives. We can all acquire such a degree of christian goodness in this life as to secure almost uninterrupted enjoyment. All we need is habitual reflection, constant self-discipline, persevering self-cultivation. Some of us will indeed have much more to accomplish for ourselves than others, owing to our different constitutional temperaments; our different educations, trials, employments, situations and conditions; our different states of character, health, habits and opinions. All of us will have something to do; and whether our work be easy or difficult, we can succeed only by persevering exertion.

In what I have said I would not be misunderstood. I am not saying that there are no evils in human life, or that they are unattended with pain and sorrow. No. All the afflictions of our mortal pilgrimage I take into consideration, and cheerfully admit their depressing tendency. But I contend that our Father created us for ever-increasing and never-ending felicity. I contend that he has endowed us with the capacities, and furnished us with the means for continual enjoyment. I contend that he has given us the gospel to raise us above the necessary evils of our condition, and to save us from the misery which ever attends or follows disobedience, and to qualify us for spiritual happiness in life and death and eternity. And I further contend, that it is as much a christian duty to be always joyful, as to obey any other injunction of the Scriptures; and that there can be no better evidence of our discipleship than our compliance with this requisition. Will you then conform to the requisitions of Jesus and secure this invaluable blessing?

SERMON XIV.

BY REV. MOSES G. THOMAS,
OF CONCORD, N. H.

ASSOCIATIONS AWAKENED BY THE LORD'S TABLE.

1 CORINTHIANS X. 16.

THE CUP OF BLESSING WHICH WE BLESS, IS IT NOT THE COMMUNION OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST? THE BREAD WHICH WE BREAK, IS IT NOT THE COMMUNION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST?

The following was one among the ceremonies of the Jewish Passover. A cup having been filled with wine, thanks were given and a blessing invoked, after which it was drunk in grateful remembrance of God's goodness in delivering the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage, and in sparing their first born while those of their oppressors were destroyed. It was called the 'cup of blessing.' In allusion to this circumstance in the observance of the Passover, the Apostle calls the wine drunk in remembrance of Christ's death the 'cup of blessing.' He proceeds in an interrogatory form to show, that partaking of this cup and of bread in remembrance of Jesus is indicative of such a union with him as would be inconsistent with idolatry; against which it was his design particularly to guard the Corinthians.

It is not intended to follow the Apostle in dissuading from idolatry, but rather in relation to the union of Christ and his disciples, which is strengthened as well

as indicated by the commemorative supper and the associations it awakens.

It is common on entering our churches to see at the altar bread and wine placed before the congregation. These memorials, which for nearly two thousand years have been before the Christian Church, awaken the most solemn and interesting associations in a few minds, while there are doubtless many who regard them without emotion and without any definite views. Some perhaps see no meaning in them; and others think nothing about them. A little reflection will teach us that they are far from unmeaning, and when properly viewed are fraught with affectionate and serious interest, giving additional solemnity to the place of worship.

The first thoughts that are awakened in view of the Lord's table, are those which relate to the last hours of his life and his crucifixion. As soon as we behold it, the mind reverts to the evening which he spent with his disciples in an upper room at Jerusalem, and to the hill of Calvary. We are reminded of the affectionate manner in which he prepared the twelve for the event of his death, and of the consolation he afforded them by the assurances he gave and the truths he revealed. In this respect the elements are like other memorials. When we enter the halls of legislation and see them adorned with the portraits of great and good men, we are at no loss as to the meaning of these memorials. When we see a monument erected where blood has been shed or the slain buried, the transactions of the place are recalled with lively interest. And when we look on some memorial which a departed friend has left us, how readily are we reminded of that friend, and of

his virtues and his love ; how freely gush the tears of affectionate remembrance ! Why may not all see the same meaning in these memorials of Jesus ? He is indeed a friend, who hath gone to the world of spirits. He is the unwearied, the universal friend of man, and these memorials hath he left us of a love stronger than death. Who then that will weep over the tokens of buried love, can regard without emotion these tokens of the love of Jesus ? Who that preserves with a carefulness bordering on superstition the relics of kindred, to remind him of their virtues and their love, can behold these sacred relics of Jesus without being reminded of his virtues and his love ? We cannot gather around them and not remember him, any more than a child can sit by a parent's grave forgetful of the character of one beloved and gone. And as the dutiful and affectionate child there recalls what that parent hath done for him and the instruction he hath given, so does the Christian with emotions equally strong and tender recall what Christ hath done for him and the instruction he hath given, when beholding the memorials of his sufferings and death. It is impossible for him to forget these things so long as he frequents the communion-table. Jesus bade us partake of these emblems with a view to this remembrance. And as we break the bread, are we not reminded of his hands and feet broken by the nails of the cross ? As we pour the wine, are we not reminded of his blood shed for the remission of sins ? The symbols are so striking, that the affectionate disciple may well be moved as he breaks the bread, and his heart be touched at so vivid an image of the flowing blood of Christ. When we add the reflec-

tion so immediately suggested, that he endured these sufferings to assure us of an existence after death, that it was a price he willingly paid to bring life and immortality to light, we learn to prize more as we ought the truth he so painfully diclosed. How emphatically then may we say, that the cup which we partake is 'the communion of the blood of Christ,' and the bread which we break is 'the communion of the body of Christ.'

The communion table is also a witness to us of some of the most stupendous miracles recorded in the Gospels. When spread in the presence of a congregation, it is a witness to all, of that scene over which the heavens were veiled in appalling gloom, and beneath which the earth trembled, the rocks were riven, and the graves gave up their dead. It is then a deep-meaning memorial of Him before whom the heavens are bowed and the earth trembleth and is obedient. It vividly recalls the manifestations of God in power and glory to the children of men. It speaks to us of the Almighty, —of the majesty in which he bare witness to that death on Calvary. If ever the house of worship is sacred to God, it is so when the disciples of his Son have there spread mementos of his most glorious manifestations to the world. If ever the faint-hearted disciple is rebuked with unfaithfulness in the day of trial, it is at the table of him who was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

But other associations than those immediately connected with the last hours of the Saviour's life, and the manifestations of Divine power and glory, are awakened by this rite. It addresses itself to every class and condition of men. Are there those who rejoice in prospe-

rity? They are reminded of him who taught them to 'make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.' They are reminded of him who disclosed to them imperishable riches, and bid them 'lay up treasure in heaven'; who promised every needed temporal blessing to those who should 'seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.' 'Though no real voice nor sound' proceeds from the emblems before us, they may become impressive teachers of the comparative worthlessness of earthly possessions and temporal pleasures. They refer us rather to pleasures which the world can neither give nor take away; which flow from a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man; which are the results of progress in the divine life, and are unfading and eternal. They rebuke the lover of perishable riches and transitory enjoyments; they remind him of one who never gave them an hour or a moment of anxious thought while on earth, but who 'for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

The anxious, those careful and troubled about many things, may here gather lessons of reproof and instruction. In these symbols they see the end of mortal cares and toil. As peacefully as slept the blessed Jesus when the toils of life and the agonies of crucifixion yielded to the repose of the tomb, they know the unwearied disciple shall rest—shall rest in the grave now deprived of its victory. Ye then who are perplexed with many cares, learn to view them in their true light. Remember that the whole journey of life is but the soul's morning, which will shortly pass away. Look in Christian

faith to the illimitable future, and the cares of this world will be properly estimated. They will seem as light and trivial as the little crosses of the infant while in its mother's bosom. They are but the disciplinary precursors of that glorious and everlasting day, which shall succeed the morning of existence and the darkness of the tomb. So do we learn to regard them at the table of him who died that we might live.

It is also an occasion which suggests consolation to the afflicted. Are there those whose dwellings have been visited by the angel of death, who have laid the objects of their long-cherished affections in the dust? Let them enter the sanctuary and behold the memorials of him who hath conquered death; who hath taken away its sting, and hath declared himself 'the resurrection and the life.' They may learn that they are not as those who mourn without hope,—that they have the joyful hope of a resurrection and reunion—the assurance that where Jesus is, there shall his faithful disciples be also. At these reflections, suggested by the death of Christ, joy may beam forth even amid the fast-flowing tears of bereavement. Faith in him who died and rose again points them to the bright realms where shall assemble that company that no man can number; where 'the wicked shall cease from troubling and the weary be at rest'; where too, we trust, fond kindred, if kindred in virtue and holiness, shall be united in never-ending felicity. Are there those who have yielded infancy, sweet, smiling infancy to the embraces of death? Here are they reminded of him who opened wide the gates of glory to the dying child; who bade it enter, a bright cherub, the kingdom of God. Ye then who have

wept over infancy in the sleep of death, cease, oh cease to mourn. Look on the cup of blessing which we bless, and remember him who affectionately embraced the guiltless child and pronounced it an heir of heaven. Ye parents, learn to love a Saviour who by his promises has placed your children near the throne. With sacred joy unite to celebrate his dying love. Withhold not your gratitude. Follow him through good report and through evil report, till you shall see him face to face.

But there is a more gloomy sorrow than that which we feel for the dead. There are arrows that pierce more deeply than the shafts of death when they bereave us of kindred,—the poisoned arrows of guilt and sin. They fester in the heart. They corrupt the springs of life and happiness. And is there no balm for wounds like these? Is there no physician for the maladies of the soul? The rite before us conveys a lesson to the wounded spirit. Let the penitent offender, the afflicted sinner come and contemplate the body and blood of Christ. He here beholds the remembrancers of a body broken and of blood shed 'for the remission of sins'; of one who labored and taught to save sinners, who promised a free pardon to the penitent, and who 'came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' There is then an invitation of mercy to the sincere penitent, however low he may have fallen. It calls upon him to arise and return to his heavenly Father, who is waiting to be gracious. It calls upon him to put off the pollution of sin, and be clothed with robes of righteousness. It calls upon him to rejoice at the supper of 'the Lamb that was slain for the sins of the world.' Were it not for this merciful invitation to the

penitent, few indeed would be found at the Lord's table. Were none but the holy, harmless and undefiled to partake of the cup of blessing, how would it be deserted! Self-judged the multitude of disciples would retire from the memorials of their crucified Lord, as a band of accusers once retired from before him when he sought among them one without sin. But thanks be to God, it is set forth as an altar of refuge to the penitent, and of peace to the returning wanderer.

Finally, there is instruction for every one in this simple rite of Christianity. It is the symbol of death vanquished, the grave robbed of victory, and life and immortality brought to light. Around it cluster associations tender, elevating, holy; hopes that reach within the veil; affections which unite us forever to Jesus and to God. Let then no one view these memorials so fraught with hallowed associations, so dear to the disciple, as devoid of interest. They may, and they ought to be profitable to all, whether professors or not. They admonish those who turn away from them, as well as those who partake of them. Let them ever be sacred to our use, teaching us of the death of Christ and of the redemption of man, till we shall drink of the cup of blessing and partake of the bread of life in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SERMON XV.

BY REV. MOSES G. THOMAS,
OF CONCORD, N. H.

WE CANNOT BE CONVERTED TILL WE WILL.

MATTHEW XIII. 13—18.

THEREFORE SPEAK I TO THEM IN PARABLES; BECAUSE THEY SEEING SEE NOT, AND HEARING THEY HEAR NOT, NEITHER DO THEY UNDERSTAND. AND IN THEM IS FULFILLED THE PROPHECY OF ESAIAS WHICH SAITH, BY HEARING YE SHALL HEAR AND SHALL NOT UNDERSTAND, AND SEEING YE SHALL SEE AND SHALL NOT PERCEIVE; FOR THIS PEOPLE'S HEART IS WAXED GROSS, AND THEIR EARS ARE DULL OF HEARING, AND THEIR EYES THEY HAVE CLOSED; LEST AT ANY TIME THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND SHOULD UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART, AND SHOULD BE CONVERTED, AND I SHOULD HEAL THEM. BUT BLESSED ARE YOUR EYES, FOR THEY SEE; AND YOUR EARS, FOR THEY HEAR. FOR VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT MANY PROPHETS AND RIGHTEOUS MEN HAVE DESIRED TO SEE THOSE THINGS WHICH YE SEE AND HAVE NOT SEEN THEM, AND TO HEAR THOSE THINGS WHICH YE HEAR AND HAVE NOT HEARD THEM. HEAR YE THERFORE THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

The passage we have quoted contains a reason which Jesus gave, when asked why he addressed the people in parables. The meaning is briefly this. Many are so blinded by their prejudices and so violent in their opposition to me and my doctrine, that if I were to rebuke, correct and instruct them with the plainness their conduct deserves, it would only enrage them still more and provoke them to unrelenting hostility, which would prove their own ruin and a hindrance to my labors in their behalf: therefore speak I to them in parables,

that those who are thus disposed to make a bad use of my instructions, to excite opposition and violence against me, may not have anything of which to accuse me ; while those who are desirous to be made wise unto salvation are enabled to understand my parables, or to have them explained, if they have sufficient interest in them to inquire for their meaning. The idea is also expressed, that those who voluntarily close their minds to instruction must not expect it to be forced upon them ; while those who are ready to receive it will receive every assistance they need. If we look for a moment at the parable which called forth the reply of the text,we shall see at once how full it is of profitable instruction, and yet how impossible it was that it should give offence to the enemies of Jesus. He had merely stated to the multitude these facts;—that a certain man went into his field to scatter grain; that some fell on rocks and withered soon after it began to grow, that some fell in the path and was eaten by the birds,that some fell among briars and was choked by them so that it could not grow; while some fell on good soil and produced abundantly. Now these were facts common to every man who went into his fields to sow grain, and there was nothing that could offend his most captious enemy. Yet when applied by Christ to the preached gospel, how full of instruction! When explained by him to those who *sought* instruction, how fraught with heavenly wisdom !

Two things are taught us by this passage of Scripture ; first, the divine wisdom of Jesus in foiling the enmity of opposers ; and secondly, the truth that we may close our minds, if we will, to instructions even

from the Son of God, and thus cut ourselves off from the hopes of future instruction, while those who sincerely desire it shall be made wise unto salvation. It is to the latter of these lessons taught by our Saviour that I would now call your most serious attention.

1. Do we sufficiently regard the fact, that we may resist all religious impressions and influences if we will? Are there not those who are waiting to be urged on to christian duty and profession—who desire some powerful appeal to the heart and conscience, some signal event of Providence, to awaken reflection and rekindle the expiring flame of devotion? Are there not those who imagine that if they were personally addressed by the Saviour, if some miracle were wrought in their behalf, they would thenceforth give up their lives to the service of God? Now the doctrine of the text is, that we may resist all religious influences if we will, and deprive ourselves of further means of instruction. Look at the Jews who listened to the accents of Jesus, and who saw his miracles by the couches of the sick and the bier and the grave of the dead. Were they convinced? Did the manifestations of divine power and glory in the person of Jesus Christ induce them to become humble and devout followers of him and worshippers of God? Very seldom was this the case. Those who were not moved by his ordinary teaching were not converted by his miracles. No; the hearts that gave no reverence and received no instruction from his mild and heavenly precepts raised the cry, 'he is leagued with devils', when he wrought miracles for their conversion. They proved the truth of the saying of Abraham in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, 'if they hear not

Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.' Are we not then justified in saying, that those who enjoy Christian institutions and privileges and who have the gospel in their hands, and yet lead irreligious lives, would be unconverted to christian duty and sobriety even if miracles, signs and wonders from heaven were wrought in their presence? How was it with those whom the Apostles addressed 'in demonstration of the spirit and with power'? Why, those who heard them stoned them, even as they cried out for the crucifixion of their Master who 'spake as never man spake.'

These facts teach us a fearful lesson of the iniquity and depravity of the heart. They teach us that where there is not an inclination of the heart and a sincere and anxious wish to become a child of God, and of immortal hopes, all the instructions of heaven and earth may prove in vain.

2. We have the Bible. It contains all the truths God has announced to undying souls. Light divine beams forth from its pages. They are resplendent with the glory of God manifested in Jesus Christ. They breathe the solemn, heart searching warnings of God to his children. They repeat to us his miracles of mercy and of judgment. They reveal the mysteries of futurity. They bring to light things hidden from the foundations of the world. The secret of death, once the dark enigma of human life, and the mystery of the grave, once appalling, and the events of futurity, once impenetrable, are all laid open, and the inward sources of eternal bliss, once undiscovered and undiscoverable, are all disclosed, and urged upon souls that may be heirs to

immortality. Yes; the Bible of itself, even one of the four Gospels, containing as each of them does an account of our Saviour's life and ministry, is abundantly sufficient unto the salvation of every soul capable of reading and understanding its truths. Any one whose heart is right, who is anxious to become a devout, religious and happy man, may become such with nothing more than the sacred word of God.

Yet how powerless is divine truth upon the hearts and souls of thousands. And why? The reader's heart is not right in the sight of God. It is dead and cold to God's living truth. There is no thirst to drink in salvation from these living waters. Men do not go to the Bible to learn what they shall do to be saved, but go to it as a kind of duty, believing that it ought to be read, and when it is read duty is done. Believe me, my friends, we may read divine truths as long as we live in this frame of mind, and they will prove 'a savor of death unto death.' We may, and in this half-hearted state we shall, resist all the influences of truth upon our souls. Before the Bible will prove to us 'a savor of life unto life', we must go to it with a willing and anxious heart, willing to be converted, willing to do the duties it requires of us, willing to pray. The whole soul must be open to conviction; pressing forward, and ready to meet every cross and every duty in the path to heaven. And never till we have first this strong, willing, open, earnest desire to receive truth and learn duty, will our souls be sanctified and our religious purposes strengthened. This willingness of heart, this openness to conviction, cost what sacrifices it may, is the frame of mind we must have before God's word will take root in the

soul. Till then will our minds be closed and our hearts hardened against the truth, and in us will be fulfilled the saying of Esaias, that 'seeing we see and do not perceive.'

3. The preaching of the gospel is another divinely appointed means sufficient unto salvation. I call the preaching of the gospel a divine institution, because Jesus Christ who spake with authority and as the Son and representative of the Father especially appointed it. The last words of the Saviour which Mark gives us were, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.' Here then we have its express appointment by Jesus Christ in the name of God, with the consequences which shall attend its acceptance and its rejection. The one shall result in salvation, the other in condemnation from the presence and blessings of God. Here are we taught by the great head and everlasting father of the Church, that a preached gospel is able to save men's souls. True as must be this declaration of the Saviour relative to the preaching of his disciples, it was equally so with reference to his own teaching. Yet, I again ask, how was his preaching received? Were there not,as we have said,multitudes who effectually closed their minds against it, who derived not the least benefit from hearing him, who even brought themselves under greater condemnation by choosing darkness rather than light, who took up stones to stone him for his reproof and his doctrine? And what does this show? What but the truth of our text, that we may, if we will, resist all

divine and religious influences, and be numbered with the lost. Man may listen to a preached gospel from lisping infancy to trembling age,and yet never know the vital power of true godliness.

And why is this ? It is because he has not first prepared his heart. He does not hear with a right spirit and purpose. He is perhaps interested and attentive, and retains on memory's surface much that is said. But this does not reach the point. He does not open the depths of his soul to divine truth. He does not labor as in the presence of a heart-searching God to apply to his own soul every thing that can be made to apply to him. He does not give himself up with perfect willingness to be moulded by christian truth and duty into the likeness of Christ and the image of God. Until he do this, the deep searchings of an archangel's intellect would not convert him. Safely may we say it, since thousands and tens of thousands turned from the voice of the Son of God himself unmoved. I wish you, friends and fellow travellers to eternity, to think on this fact. The power of God unto salvation will not reach us through his preached gospel until we humbly give ourselves up to it,—until we throw our hearts open, and receive its truths with the meekness of the child whom Jesus set before his disciples as an example of the disposition that would fit them for heaven. This purpose must be formed—to give oneself up to christian duty entirely, to do and forbear to do whatever it requires, before the soul will experience that serious, solid, deep-seated pleasure and delight in religious services which is an earnest of heavenly enjoyment.

4. The providence of God as going on around us is

abundantly sufficient to teach us heavenly wisdom, if our hearts are prepared for the instruction. To some the events of providence are revelations of light and truth, while to others they are enigmas dark and fearful. So true is it, that just in proportion as we open our minds to the truths of his word, are they opened to the ways of his providence. Just in proportion as our wills become conformed to His, do we view events as He views them, and are so reconciled to what would otherwise appear gloomy and mysterious. We are led to adore and praise where we might otherwise weep and deplore. But notwithstanding the effulgence of divine glory which attends the ways of God among men, they are to many minds no more than the blind results of chance and the fearful progress of unmeaning fate. Such is the certainty with which man may close his mind against the spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father. All the chastenings of a Father's love, by which he would reclaim the wandering and the lost, may be as surely resisted as the Bible and a preached gospel. Not only may they be resisted, but they will be, until we humbly open the whole heart to God and give up our souls to his guidance. Instead of doing this, many are often occupied in devising ways and means by which application of truth and duty to the soul may be avoided. So long as such is the disposition of a man, his soul is lost. He is lost to the blessings of divine truth; lost to the soul's true, inward, and only lasting happiness; lost to God, to his word, to the preached gospel of his Son, to the events of his providence, and to the bliss of heaven. He is unregenerate. He is not born of God, nor an heir of the spiritual Father.

Most earnestly do I desire, my friends, that these considerations may induce us to examine our own hearts and cast out the spirit of unwillingness and unbelief, which is so effectual and so certain a barrier to the soul's redemption unto holiness, happiness and heaven. Oh, may God give us a right spirit in submitting ourselves to his appointed means of grace and glory. May we all realize that if we have a spirit within us that is opposing our salvation, all other means will prove in vain. We must first win over ourselves to be earnestly and heartily engaged on the side of our own salvation. Until we succeed in this, until we become determined and fixed on salvation at any cost and are willing and anxious to be led to it and to receive it, the Bible will teach and warn in vain, the preached gospel will be little better than the crackling of thorns, and the events of providence as unmeaning and powerless to the faithless heart as is the pictured battle on a painted banner when compared with the blood and dust and agony over which it floats. Oh, let us contemplate the lost condition of the soul until we feel within us an entire openness of the heart to religious instruction, a willingness to be seriously impressed, and a thirsting of the soul to draw near to God. Amen.

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